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THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO

LITERATURE
AND FOOD

Edited by J. Michelle Coghlan



THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION
TO LITERATURE AND FOOD

This *Cambridge Companion* provides an engaging and expansive overview of gustation, gastronomy, agriculture, and alimentary activism in literature from the medieval period to the present day, as well as an illuminating introduction to cookbooks as literature. Bringing together sixteen original essays by leading scholars, the collection rethinks literary food from a variety of critical angles, including gender and sexuality, critical race studies, postcolonial studies, ecocriticism, and children's literature. Topics covered include mealtime decorum in Chaucer, Milton's culinary metaphors, early American taste, Romantic gastronomy, Victorian eating, African American women's culinary writing, modernist food experiments, Julia Child and Cold War cooking, industrialized food in children's literature, agricultural horror and farmworker activism, queer cookbooks, hunger as protest and postcolonial legacy, and "dude food" in contemporary food blogs. Featuring a chronology of key publication and historical dates and a comprehensive bibliography of further reading, this *Companion* is an indispensable guide to an exciting field for students and instructors.

J. Michelle Coghlan is Lecturer in American Literature at the University of Manchester, UK. She is the author of *Sensational Internationalism: The Paris Commune and the Remapping of American Memory in the Long Nineteenth Century*, which won the 2017 Arthur Miller Centre First Book Prize in American Studies. Her articles have appeared in *Arizona Quarterly*, *The Henry James Review*, *Resilience: A Journal of the Environmental Humanities*, and several edited collections, including Gitanjali G. Shahani's *Food and Literature*. She is currently completing a book on food writing and the making of American taste in the nineteenth century.

A complete list of books in the series is at the back of this book.

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LITERATURE AND FOOD

EDITED BY
J. MICHELLE COGHLAN
University of Manchester



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Studies, Fat Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Body Weight and Society, Journal of Historical Research in Marketing, and Yearbook of Women's History, among others.

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DENISE GIGANTE, Professor of English at Stanford University, is the author of *Taste: A Literary History* (Yale University Press, 2005) and the editor of *Gusto: Essential Writings in Nineteenth-Century Gastronomy* (Routledge, 2005). More recently on this same topic, she has published “Transgressions in Taste: Libraries Ornamental, Gastronomical, and Bibliomaniacal” in *The Persistence of Taste: Art, Museums and Everyday Life Since Bourdieu*, edited by Dave Beech, Michael Lehnert, Malcolm Quinn, Carol Tulloch, and Stephen Wilson (Routledge, 2018), a chapter on Milton’s *Comus* titled “Good Taste, Good Food, and the Gastronome” in *Literature and Food* edited by Gitanjali G. Shahani (Cambridge University Press, 2018), and “Coffee in the Age of Gastronomy: A Chapter in the History of Taste” in *The Taste Culture Reader*, edited by Carolyn Korsmeyer (Bloomsbury, 2017).

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Pleasures: Sex, Sandal and Victorian Letters (Oxford University Press, 2012), she has also published articles on queer temporality, Matthew Arnold's diet, vegetal poetics, wax queens, and nineteenth-century potboiler fiction. She is currently working on a monograph about the industrialization of food and culture, titled *Victorians Fat and Thin*.

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CHRONOLOGY OF MAJOR WORKS AND EVENTS

- 380 BCE Plato, *Gorgias*, wherein Socrates suggests cooking is mere “routine,” rather than art.
- 390–450 CE Apicius, *De Re Coquinaria* (“On Cooking”), oldest surviving Roman cookbook.
- ca. 700–1025 Anon., *Beowulf*.
- ca. 1173 William FitzStephen, *Description of London* includes account of meals partaken at public cookshops along the Thames.
- 1255 Anon., *Havelok*.
- ca. 1300 Rustichello da Pisa, *Livre des Merveilles du Monde* (“Book of the Marvels of the World”) recounts Marco Polo’s travels in China, including descriptions of restaurant culture in Hangzhou.
- ca. 1363–87 William Langland, *Piers Plowman*.
- ca. 1390 Anon., *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*; Chief master cooks of King Richard II, *Forme of Cury* (“Method of Cooking”), one of the earliest known English cookbooks.
- ca. 1390s Geoffrey Chaucer, the *Canterbury Tales*.
- ca. 1400 Anon., the *Alliterative Morte Arthure*.
- ca. 1450 John Russell, *Boke of Nurture*.
- 1492 Christopher Columbus “discovers” America.
- 1493 Christopher Columbus introduces sugarcane in Hispaniola during his second voyage to the Americas.
- 1498 Vasco da Gama reaches Calicut, India.
- ca. 1500 Portuguese colonists introduce maize in Africa and sugarcane in Brazil.
- 1508 Wynkyn de Worde, *Boke of Keruyngē*.

CHRONOLOGY OF MAJOR WORKS AND EVENTS

- 1517 Martin Luther posts his Ninety-Five Theses in Wittenberg, helping spark the Protestant Reformation and Eucharistic debates across Europe.
- 1534 King Henry VIII breaks with Rome over his divorce of Catherine of Aragon. Parliament passes the Act of Supremacy (1534), which declares him Head of the Church of England.
- 1571 Luís Vaz de Camões, *The Lusiads*.
- 1573 John Partridge, *The Treasurie of Commodious Conceits*.
- 1589 George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesy*.
- 1590 Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene* (1590, 1596).
- ca. 1596 William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*.
- 1600 East India Company (1600–1874) receives Royal Charter from Queen Elizabeth I to commence trade in the East Indies; from 1757, the Company rules over much of the Indian subcontinent.
- 1607 Virginia Company founds Jamestown, the first successful English colony in the Americas.
- 1611 William Shakespeare, *The Winter's Tale*.
- 1620 The *Mayflower* lands at Plymouth Bay, and its Pilgrim settlers found Plymouth Colony.
- 1637 Pieter Blower begins cultivation of sugarcane in Barbados. By 1680, sugar will be the dominant crop in all British and French-held islands in the Caribbean; as in Brazil, the brutal system of sugar production will be maintained by the importation of vast numbers of enslaved Africans.
- 1641 Outbreak of Rebellion in Ulster.
- 1642 Outbreak of English Civil War.
- 1649 Trial and execution of King Charles I. Launch of Cromwell's brutal conquest of Ireland (1649–53).
- 1652 The Dutch East India Company founds the Cape Colony in present-day Cape Town, South Africa.
- 1653 Oliver Cromwell dissolves Parliament and declares himself Lord Protector of England.
- 1655 English troops capture Jamaica from Spain. The country will remain a British colony until it gains its independence in 1962.
- 1660 Stuart monarchy restored in England.
- Royal Society founded in London by a group of natural philosophers committed to scientific knowledge by experimentation, including

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- John Wilkins, Robert Boyle, Robert Hooke, and Christopher Wren.
- 1666 Margaret Cavendish, *Observations upon Experimental Philosophy*.
- 1667 John Milton, *Paradise Lost*.
- 1669 Sir Kenelm Digby, *The Closet of Sir Kenelm Digby, Open'd* includes the first Chinese recipe published in England.
- 1712 Joseph Addison, “Taste.”
- 1757 David Hume, “Of the Standard of Taste.”
- 1766 Mathurin Roze de Chantoiseau opens his *salle de restaurant* on Rue St. Honoré in Paris, inaugurating modern restaurant culture.
- 1769 Bengal Famine (1769–72), exacerbated by East India Company rule, kills an estimated 10 million people, one third of the total population of Bengal.
- 1775 The American Revolutionary War (1775–83).
- 1776 Declaration of Independence adopted by the Second Continental Congress in Philadelphia.
- 1787 Colony of Freetown established in present-day Sierra Leone by formerly enslaved Black Britons with the support of British abolitionists.
- 1789 Storming of the Bastille in Paris launches the French Revolution (1789–99). French refugees open restaurants in London, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Charleston, New Orleans, and various European cities.
- 1791 Haitian Revolution (1791–1804), the most successful slave uprising in the Americas, defeats French colonial forces and establishes Haiti as an independent nation.
- William Fox, *An Address to the People of Great Britain, On the Consumption of West India Produce*, the most widely distributed pamphlet of the eighteenth century, helps to spark sugar and rum boycott by anti-slavery campaigners in Britain and the USA.
- 1792 William Cowper, “Epigram.”
- 1794 French food writer and philosopher Jean-Anthelme Brillat-Savarin flees to New York (1794–7) in the aftermath of the French Revolution.

CHRONOLOGY OF MAJOR WORKS AND EVENTS

- 1795 British troops seize the Cape Colony from the Netherlands. It will return to Dutch control in 1803 and once again come under British rule from 1806.
- 1796 Amelia Simmons, *American Cookery*, the first known American cookbook.
- 1798 Irish Rebellion led by the Society of United Irishmen seeks the end of British rule in Ireland.
- 1801 Act of Union (1800) takes effect, dissolving the Irish Parliament and merging the Kingdom of Great Britain and the Kingdom of Ireland into the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland.
- 1803 A. B. L. Grimod de La Reynière begins publishing the *Almanach des gourmands* (1803–12).
- 1808 After two decades of transatlantic abolitionist agitation, Britain and the USA outlaw the importation of enslaved Africans, but internal slave trade continues.
- 1810 Freetown settlement (present-day Sierra Leone) becomes a British crown colony.
- 1810 Sake Dean Mohomed opens the Hindoostane Coffee House, the first Indian restaurant in London.
- 1813 Percy Bysshe Shelley, “A Vindication of Natural Diet.”
- 1816 William Hazlitt, “On Gusto.”
- 1817 William Kitchiner, *Apicius Redevivus, or the Cook’s Oracle*.
- 1818 Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*.
- 1824 Mary Randolph, *The Virginia Housewife*.
- 1825 Jean Anthelm Brillat-Savarin, *The Physiology of Taste*.
- 1829 Lydia Maria Child, *The Frugal Housewife*.
- 1831 Swiss immigrants Giovanni and Pietro Delmonico open Delmonico’s in New York.
- 1833 Slavery Abolition Act abolishes slavery throughout the British Empire.
- 1841 William Makepeace Thackeray, “Memorials of Gourmandizing.”
- 1842 Catharine Beecher, *A Treatise on Domestic Economy*.
- 1844 Eliza Acton, *Modern Cookery for Private Families*.
- 1845 Potato blight triggers the Great Famine in Ireland (1845–9). Over one million people die of starvation or malnutrition, wiping out one eighth of the country’s total population, exacerbated by the

CHRONOLOGY OF MAJOR WORKS AND EVENTS

- British government's decision not to cap food exports out of the country. An estimated two million inhabitants emigrate to the USA, Britain, and Australia.
- 1846 US–Mexican War (1846–8).
- 1847 William Carleton, *The Black Prophet*.
- James Clarence Mangan, “The Song of the Albanian.”
- Alexander Somerville, *Letters from Ireland during the Famine of 1847*.
- 1848 James Clarence Mangan, “A Voice of Encouragement.”
- William Henry Smith, *A Twelve Months’ Residence in Ireland, during the Famine and the Public Works, 1846 and 1847*.
- 1849 Canton Restaurant, the first Chinese restaurant in North America, opens in San Francisco.
- James Clarence Mangan, “For Soul and Country,” “Bear Up,” “Siberia” and “A Vision: A. D. 1848.”
- 1850 Sydney Godolphin Osborne, *Gleanings in the West of Ireland*.
- 1851 The first Great Exhibition held in Crystal Palace, London.
- Asenath Nicholson, *Annals of the Famine in Ireland*.
- 1852 Lady Clutterbuck (Catherine Dickens), *What Shall We Have for Dinner?*
- 1854 John Mitchel, *Jail Journal*.
- 1857 Indian Mutiny against British colonial rule.
- Charles Pierce, *The Household Manager*.
- 1859 Isabella Beeton, *Book of Household Management*.
- 1860 Charles Selby/Tabitha Ticklemooth, *The Dinner Question or How to Dine Well & Economically*.
- Anthony Trollope, *Castle Richmond* and *Framley Parsonage* (1860–1).
- 1861 American Civil War (1861–5).
- 1863 Abraham Lincoln fixes the date of Thanksgiving as the last Thursday in November.
- 1863 Lydia Maria Child, “Willie Wharton.”
- 1865 13th Amendment abolishes slavery in the USA.
- Lewis Carroll, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*.
- 1866 Malinda Russell, *A Domestic Cook Book*.

CHRONOLOGY OF MAJOR WORKS AND EVENTS

- 1867 District 6, a mixed community of freed slaves, immigrants, merchants, and artisans, established in Cape Town, South Africa.
- 1869 Catharine Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe, *The American Woman's Home*.
- 1874 Charles Lamb, "A Dissertation Upon Roast Pig."
- 1881 Abby Fisher, *What Mrs Fisher Knows About Old Southern Cooking*.
- 1882 Thomas Carlyle, *Reminiscences of My Irish Journey in 1849*.
- Chinese Exclusion Act prohibits Chinese "skilled and unskilled laborers" from entering the USA.
- 1889 *Cassell's Book of the Household* (1889–91).
- The British South Africa Company, under the direction of Cecil Rhodes, acquires a royal charter to colonize and control mining rights in Matebeleland (present-day Zimbabwe).
- 1895 The New York Vegetarian Society opens the first Vegetarian restaurant in the USA, Vegetarian Restaurant No.1, in New York City.
- The British South Africa Company christens territory south of Zambezi in present-day Zimbabwe "Rhodesia" in honor of Cecil Rhodes.
- Fannie Farmer, *The Boston Cooking School Cook Book*.
- 1899 Kate Chopin, *The Awakening*.
- 1901 Frank Norris, *The Octopus*.
- Romesh Chunder Dutt, *Indian Famines: Their Causes and Prevention*.
- 1902 Owen Wister, *The Virginian*.
- 1906 Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle*, which helped to spur the passage of the Meat Inspection Act (1906) and Pure Food and Drug Act (1906) in the USA.
- 1910 *The Federation Cook Book*, a community cookbook authored by "the Colored Women of the State of California."
- The Union of South Africa founded, uniting the British colonies of the Cape and Natal with the Boer republics of Transvaal and the Orange Free State. It remains an autonomous dominion of the British Empire until 1931.
- 1912 Founding of the Native National Conference, later known as the African National Congress (ANC).

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- 1914 Austria-Hungary declares war on Serbia, sparking World War I. Food shortages and, eventually, rationing spread across Europe.
- 1916 Easter Rising in Dublin.
- 1919 Treaty of Versailles, end of World War I.
- 1920 British Parliament passes the Government of Ireland Act, formally partitioning Ireland into two, and allowing for limited “home rule” of Southern Ireland in Dublin and Northern Ireland in Belfast.
- 1921 Mahatma Gandhi launches Non-Cooperation Movement against British colonial rule in India.
- 1921 Anglo-Irish Treaty ends Irish War of Independence.
- 1922 H. P. Lovecraft, “The Picture in the House.”
- 1922 Establishment of Irish Free State.
- 1923 Southern Rhodesia becomes a self-governing British colony following a whites-only referendum vote.
- 1928 Oswald de Andrade, *Manifesto Antropofago*.
- 1929 Wall Street Crash on October 24 triggers Great Depression in the USA and severe global economic downturn. Widespread unemployment, hunger, and food insecurity lead to National Hunger Marches in the USA, Britain, and France in the early 1930s.
- 1930 Mahatma Gandhi launches Civil Disobedience campaign (1930–4) in India, and engages in a series of hunger strikes to unite India and protest British colonial rule.
- 1932 F. T. Marinetti, *The Futurist Cookbook*.
- 1935 Mulk Raj Anand, *Untouchable*.
- 1936 Dorothea Lange, “Migrant Mother.”
- 1936 Pare Lorentz, *The Plow that Broke the Plains*.
- 1937 Liam O’Flaherty, *Famine*.
- 1939 German invasion of Poland sparks outbreak of World War II.
- 1939 John Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath*.
- 1939 Carey McWilliams, *Factories in the Fields*.
- 1939 Sanora Babb, *Whose Names are Unknown* (pub. 1996).
- 1940 Nazi Occupation of France; stringent food rationing imposed throughout the country.

CHRONOLOGY OF MAJOR WORKS AND EVENTS

- The British government's Ministry of Food introduces food rationing of sugar, meat, fats, bacon, and cheese; the purchase of canned foods, dried fruit, cereals, and biscuits would later also require ration coupons.
- Woody Guthrie, "The Ballad of Tom Joad."
- 1941 Debut of *Gourmet* (1941–2009), the first American magazine devoted entirely to the topic of food and wine.
- 1942 The Combined Food Board launched by the British and American governments to coordinate wartime food strategy, shipments and rationing.
- M. F. K. Fisher, *How to Cook a Wolf*.
- US government begins rationing sugar and coffee; the purchase of items such as meat, lard, shortening, cheese, butter, margarine, dried fruits, canned milk, and processed foods will require ration coupons by 1943.
- 1943 Bengal Famine (1943–4), exacerbated by British colonial policies, kills an estimated three million people.
- 1944 Bijon Bhattacharya, *Nabanno* (*New Rice*).
Tarashankar Bandyopadhyay, *Manavantar* (*Epoch's End*).
Sukanta Bhattacharya, *Aakaal* (*Famine*).
Ela Sen, *Darkening Days*.
- 1945 German forces surrender to the Allies, ending World War II in Europe (May 8).
- The USA drops atomic bombs on Hiroshima (August 6) and Nagasaki (August 8). Japan surrenders to the Allies (August 15), ending World War II in Asia.
- 1946 Freda DeKnight's cooking column, "A Date with A Dish," debuts in *Ebony* magazine.
Carlos Bulosan, *America is in the Heart*.
- 1946 Lorine Niedecker, *New Goose*.
- 1947 India proclaimed independent from British rule and partitioned into India and Pakistan.
- Bhabani Bhattacharya, *So Many Hungers!*
- 1948 Freda DeKnight, *A Date with a Dish*.
Policy of racial segregation known as apartheid formally adopted under the white supremacist Afrikaner National Party government.

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- 1949 End of food rationing in France, in part due to US Marshall Plan agricultural aid.
- 1953 *Playboy* magazine (1953–), complete with cooking column, is first published.
- 1954 Alice B. Toklas, *The Alice B. Toklas Cookbook*.
British government ends food rationing program begun in 1940.
Sir Milton Margai, leader of the Sierra Leone's People's Party, elected Chief Minister (later, Prime Minister) of Sierra Leone.
Bhabani Bhattacharya, *He Who Rides a Tiger*.
- 1955 Ray Kroc opens his first McDonald's franchise in Des Plaines, Illinois.
- 1956 Sulekha Sanyal, *Nabankur (The Seedling)*.
- 1958 The National Council of Negro Women, *Historical Cookbook of the American Negro*.
- 1959 Truman Capote, *In Cold Blood*.
Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay, *Ashani Sanket (Distant Thunder)*.
- 1960 Peg Bracken, *I Hate to Cook Book*.
The Student Non-Violent Organization Committee (SNCC) launches national sit-in movement after four African American college students stage a sit-in at Woolworth's lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina to protest racially segregated dining in America.
- 1961 Julia Child, Simone Beck, and Louisette Bertholle, *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*.
South Africa declared a republic following a whites-only referendum vote to leave the British Commonwealth.
Founding of the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU), which called for the end to whites-only rule of Zimbabwe and independence from Britain.
- 1962 Sierra Leone declared independent from British rule.
National Farm Workers Association formed under the leadership of Dolores Huerta and Cesar Chavez.
- 1963 Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring*.
Julia Child's cooking show, *The French Chef*, debuts on Boston's National Educational Television channel.
Founding of the Zimbabwean African National Union (ZANU), which called for the end to whites-only rule of Zimbabwe and independence from Britain.

CHRONOLOGY OF MAJOR WORKS AND EVENTS

- Manik Bandyopadhyay, “Aaj Kaal Porshur Golpo” (“A Tale of These Days”).
- 1964 Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal*.
- South African anti-apartheid activist Nelson Mandela sentenced to life in prison.
- 1965 Lou Rand Hogan, *The Gay Cookbook: The Complete Compendium of Campy Cuisine and Menus for Men ... or What Have You*.
- Ian Smith, leader of the white Rhodesian government, declares unilateral independence from Britain.
- 1966 Luis Valdez, “Quinta Temporada.”
- South African government declares District 6 a whites-only area under the Group Areas Act and begins forced removals of black and immigrant residents.
- 1968 M. F. K. Fisher, “Anatomy of a Recipe.”
- Ayi Kwei Armah, *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*.
- 1969 Margaret Atwood, *The Edible Woman*.
- Raymond Barrio, *The Plum Plum Pickers*.
- 1970 Vertamae Smart-Grosvenor, *Vibration Cooking: Or, Travel Notes of a Geechee Girl*.
- The first Earth Day celebration held in the USA, which brought together students from two thousand college and universities, ten thousand primary and secondary schools, and communities across the country to campaign for environmental reforms.
- 1971 Alice Waters opens Chez Panisse in Berkeley, California.
- Tomás Rivera, *Y No Se Lo Tragó La Tierra*.
- 1975 Eavan Boland, “The Famine Road.”
- 1977 Stephen King, “Children of the Corn.”
- 1978 Dambudzo Marechera, *House of Hunger*.
- 1980 Kitchen Table Press (1980–92) founded by Audre Lorde and Barbra Smith.
- Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, *The Devil on the Cross*.
- ZANU leader Robert Mugabe elected Prime Minister of Zimbabwe.
- 1982 South African government orders the demolition of the final remaining houses in District Six. Some 60,000 residents forcibly relocated during its clearance (1966–82).

CHRONOLOGY OF MAJOR WORKS AND EVENTS

- 1986 Bode Noonan, *Red Beans and Rice*.
- 1987 Fannie Flagg, *Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Café*.
- 1990 Lindsey Collen, *There is a Tide*.
- Nelson Mandela released from prison.
- 1991 Sierre Leone Civil War (1991–2002).
- 1992 Cherríe Moraga, *Heroes and Saints*.
- 1993 The Food TV Network cable television channel (now known as the Food Network) debuts in the USA.
- 1994 Eavan Boland, *In a Time of Violence*.
- The African National Congress (ANC) wins the first free elections in South Africa and Nelson Mandela is elected president.
- 1995 Helena María Viramontes, *Under the Feet of Jesus*.
- Lucha Corpí, *Cactus Blood*.
- 1998 Ffiona Morgan, *The Lesbian Erotic Cookbook: Cuisine Extraordinaire to Caress and Fondle the Palate*.
- 2002 Julie Powell begins the Julie/Julia Project, helping to inaugurate the food blog genre.
- Mass food shortages in Zimbabwe.
- 2004 Rozena Maart, *Rosa's District 6*.
- 2005 Zimbabwean government launches “Operation Murambatsvina,” a program of forced slum clearances in urban areas that displaces an estimated 700,000 residents.
- 2006 Aminatta Forna, *Ancestor Stones*.
- Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *Half of a Yellow Sun*.
- 2007 Paul Lynch, *Grace*.
- 2008 Lee Lynch, Nel Ward, and Sue Hardesty, *The Butch Cookbook*.
- Aravind Adiga, *The White Tiger*.
- Alex Rivera, *Sleep Dealer*.
- 2009 Beatrice Pita and Rosaura Sánchez, *Lunar Braceros 2125–2148*.
- 2012 Ceyenne Doroshow, *Cooking in Heels: A Memoir Cookbook*.
- 2013 NoViolet Bulawayo, *We Need New Names*.
- 2014 Hannah Hart, *My Drunk Kitchen: A Guide to Eating, Drinking, & Going with Your Gut*.

J. MICHELLE COGHLAN

Introduction: The Literature of Food

“Food,” as Molly Wizenberg has reminded us, “is never just food. It’s also a way of getting at something else: who we are, who we have been, and who we want to be.”¹ But what exactly is at stake when we step into the kitchen, choose a restaurant, watch a cooking show, or read about a meal someone else ate? Culinary texts and literary representations of both gustation and gastronomy help bring into profound relief the degree to which food has long served as a cultural marker of complex and oft-conflicting desires, affiliations, and identities – national belonging and regional attachments, class distinctions and racial stereotypes, gender norms and sexual appetites, agricultural policies and imperial legacies, public agendas and personal tastes. Yet pausing over how literary forms register the most ephemeral of somatic sensations also pushes us to grapple with what material traces might be left by the most visceral, seemingly unarchivable, of gustatory experiences (and their lack). And it does so at a moment when the virtual turn in our everyday life paradoxically – and, indeed, symptomatically – has newly reoriented us to taste as a sensation even as the ecological crisis on our horizon shadows the emergence of contemporary foodie culture and our relationship to the recipes and snapshots of food ever-present on our social mediascapes.

This *Companion* takes as its starting point the contention that literature, from the feasts depicted in medieval romances to the “bulleyt bottled peas and pseudo-cottage bread [that is] the menu of Anglo-India” in E.M. Forster’s *A Passage to India*, offers unique insight into the complexity of food matters even as it works at once to archive and refashion our tastes in a gastronomic sense. The sixteen essays commissioned for this collection provide an expansive overview of literary representations of gustation, gastronomy, agriculture, and alimentary activism from the medieval and early modern periods to the twenty-first century, and offer a variety of historical and theoretical approaches to reading the cultural and aesthetic work of food across those periods, including gender and sexuality, critical race studies, postcolonial studies, ecocriticism, and children’s literature. But the volume is

equally concerned with addressing culinary texts – cookbooks, food manifestos, household manuals, and food blogs – as worthy of literary study in their own right. Although nineteenth-century American food writer Elizabeth Robbins Pennell insisted that “a cookery book can have every good quality that a book can have,” and despite the fact that many nineteenth-century American cookery writers successfully published in a variety of other genres, including poetry and detective fiction, literary studies has been slow to recognize culinary writing as both a literary and a cultural text.² Responding to recent developments in the field of literary studies – in particular, Susan J. Leonardi’s pioneering analysis of cookbooks as complex narrative forms and Kyla Wazana Tompkins’s recent work on recipes as disjunctive poetic forms – this volume explores culinary literature from early modern receipt books to 1970s Black Power cookbooks (and beyond) as an identifiable literary tradition whose aesthetic conventions and formal experiments should be read as part of – rather than adjacent to – the other forms of literature produced in its period.³

The turn to cookbooks as literature, as well as the growing interest in the literature of food exemplified in this volume, has its roots in the rise of Food Studies. Although the Association for the Study of Food and Society was established in 1985, the term “food studies” first emerges in the 1990s, when a range of disciplines – among them, anthropology, sociology, cultural geography, women’s studies, and history – began to analyze food and foodways. In turn, US universities began to establish degree programs in the interdisciplinary study of the cultural, economic, historical, and geographic aspects of food; among the first was New York University’s Department of Nutrition and Food Studies, founded in 1996, the same year that the journal *Food, Culture and Society* published its inaugural issue.⁴ While the social sciences dominated much of the early work produced in the field, the founding of *Gastronomica: The Journal of Food and Culture* in 2001 underscored the crystallization of the field as such and highlighted the insights the humanities could bring to the study and stakes of food in all its forms.

There are a number of possible origin stories for the field of food studies. Most converge on the moment when food came to matter in new ways in the 1960s and 1970s because of pioneering work by anthropologists Claude Lévi-Strauss and Mary Douglas and sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. As food studies scholar Marion Nestle puts it, “I think of Lévi-Strauss as the inventor of the field of Food Studies before the field existed.”⁵ In *The Raw and the Cooked* (1964), Lévi-Strauss identified cooking as a symbolic language, showing how the cook transforms raw materials into socially sanctioned edibles, and suggesting that food in its raw, cooked, and rotten forms constantly traverses the boundaries of nature and culture.⁶ Douglas suggested in essays such as “Deciphering a Meal” (1972)

that meals were worth our notice because they were biological and social acts as well as elaborate social codes.⁷ Building on such work, Bourdieu's *Distinction: A Social Judgment of Taste* (1979) argued that what and how we eat – not to mention, what and how we eat in front of others – carries with it what he termed “cultural capital,” and taste, in turn, helps to reinforce at once social privilege and access to economic capital.⁸ Six years later, anthropologist Sidney Mintz's groundbreaking *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (1985) traced how the importation of sugar cane transformed the Caribbean ecology and catalyzed the global slave trade, even as the exportation of refined sugar back to Europe drove the diets of its newly urban working-class poor and the pace of industrialization itself.⁹ Such work helped to usher in a number of single-commodity histories aimed at scholarly and popular audiences, including Wolfgang Schivelbusch's *Tastes of Paradise: A Social History of Spices, Stimulants* (1992), James C. McCann's *Maize and Grace: Africa's Encounter with a New World Crop, 1500–2000* (2005), and Lizzie Collingham's *The Taste of Empire: How Britain's Quest for Food Shaped the Modern World* (2017).¹⁰

Let us explore an alternative entryway into both food studies, more broadly, and literary food studies, more particularly. In 1957, French literary theorist Roland Barthes published *Mythologies*, a collection of essays aimed at interrogating the modern myths of everyday French life, myths everywhere reinforced by glossy magazines and popular culture. In one such essay, “Wine and Milk,” Barthes took aim at wine, his nation’s preeminent national drink, and sought to de-naturalize his compatriots’ relationship to their daily act of drinking it. Wine, he finally insisted,

is a good and fine substance, but it is no less true that its production is deeply involved in French capitalism, whether it is that of the French distillers, or that of the big settlers in Algeria who impose on the Muslims, on the very land of which they have been dispossessed, a crop of which they have no need, while they lack even bread. There are thus very engaging myths which are, however, not innocent. And the characteristic of our current alienation is precisely that wine cannot be an unalloyed blissful substance, except if we wrongly forget that it is also the product of expropriation.¹¹

Barthes points here to the entanglement of French wine production and French imperialism, and gestures, too, to the war over Algerian independence then being brutally fought by the French paratroopers known as *parachutists*. (This paragraph notably did not conclude the essay when it first appeared in the literary review *Lettres Nouvelles* in April 1955: the escalation of the war, as Joseph Bohling points out, led to its inclusion in 1957.¹²) But Barthes also highlights here how much our pleasures and our tastes – even our favorite drinks – are products of labor often erased by the corporations that produce and market

them to us. A choice of beverages thus necessarily entangles us in longer histories of labor and empire, and more specifically, in agricultural exploitation and colonial histories that long ensured wine (or bread) would be enjoyed in the metropole while those producing it would go hungry, agricultural circuits and inequities taken up in a number of chapters in this *Companion*, among them those by Parama Roy, Jonathan Bishop Highfield, Sarah D. Wald, Michael Newbury, and Allison Carruth. But in turning his attention to wine, that otherwise “unalloyedly blissful substance,” Barthes also wanted us to see how the everyday ritual of drinking transubstantiated a given liquid into an altogether other order of thing: a collective source of identification, class distinction, and conviviality, as well as a crucial marker of exclusion for those who choose, for religious, cultural, or health reasons, not to partake of (and in) it, a drama of culinary identity formation explored and complicated by Lauren Klein, Katharina Vester, Anne Anlin Cheng, and Emily Contois in this volume.

If Barthes’ reflections on wine as social signifier and imperial product seem today deeply timely, it was significantly not always thus. When literary critic Jonathan Culler reviewed the first English translation of *Mythologies* in 1973 in the *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, he complained the volume had aged badly: “The book is now read in a situation which makes it a myth: for the English reader it does not challenge what he takes for granted and engage the culture which surrounds him; it says, rather, ‘look how one of those fashionable structuralists performs.’”¹³ Culler suggested the essays were inaccessible for the English reader, engaging matters too distant from known history that didn’t matter beyond France. And he cites in particular Barthes’ attention to wine, milk, steak, and chips as likely to strike the English reader as “ingenuous but gratuitous exercises” despite the fact that Barthes’ insights on the relationship between food production, national taste, cultural expropriation and empire would impact upon English eating – as well as US food cultures – in equal measure.¹⁴ That these essays could seem extraneous four decades ago in a way that they now seem indispensable is a sign of how much food has come to saturate our everyday life – becoming not simply something in which we do or do not partake, but instead something we everywhere watch and read and write about as much as eat. (That contemporary foodie culture has its roots in the moment in the nineteenth century when cookbooks first began to outpace the sales of literary celebrities and the rise of the modern restaurant encouraged urban dwellers to become voyeurs at the meals that others ate is taken up by Denise Gigante and Kate Thomas in their chapters for this *Companion*.) But it also points to the degree to which literary studies has come to take food and food matters seriously.

Over the past two decades, a number of groundbreaking books have been published on the topic of literature and taste in the gastronomic sense, among

them Doris Witt's *Black Hunger: Soul Food and America* (1999), Robert Appelbaum's *Aguecheek's Beef, Belch's Hiccup and Other Gastronomic Interjections: Literature, Culture and Food Among the Early Moderns* (2006), Kara K. Keeling and Scott T. Pollard's *Critical Approaches to Food in Children's Literature* (2009), and Allison Carruth's *Global Appetites: American Power and the Literature of Food* (2013). And attention to matters of gastronomy, consumption, hunger, agriculture, and alimentary activism has reshaped a number of fields in literary studies – crucially shifting, for example, our understandings of taste in a gastronomic and aesthetic sense, race as a curiously edible literary matter, and empire and its fictions as inescapably routed through the mouth.¹⁵ Our contemporary moment's obsession with foodie culture, food blogs, so-called "food porn" and a variety of bestselling food exposés and food memoirs have helped to fuel the publication of several recent anthologies of food writing and food literature, including *Eating Words: A Norton Anthology of Food Writing* (Ed. Sandra M. Gilbert, 2015) and the Library of America's *American Food Writing: An Anthology with Classic Recipes* (Ed. Molly O'Neill, 2009). While these anthologies are aimed at a broad readership, and suggest a substantial interest in the literature of food beyond the academy, they also speak to the growing number of undergraduate and graduate courses examining food matters and/in literature being offered by departments of English, Comparative Literature, Ethnic Studies, and American Studies, another testament to the vibrancy of the field.

This *Companion* brings into relief the dynamism of literary food studies by way of chapters that rethink the work of food as metaphor and material chronologically, from the depictions of decorous feasting in *The Canterbury Tales* to "dude food" in contemporary food blogs. But as the relationship between literature and hunger, gustation, gastronomy, agriculture, and alimentary activism is as capacious as it is complex, several of its chapters – including "Queering the Cookbook," "Postcolonial Tastes," "Black Power in the Kitchen," and "Guilty Pleasures in Children's Literature" – offer accounts of literary food and its lack that pointedly cross-cut across traditional periods in order to better illuminate the aesthetics and politics of both literary food and culinary texts. From mealtime decorum in Chaucer and serialized Victorian dining to modernist food experiments, queer cookbooks, and the literature of farmworker activism, it takes up a rich array of authors and thematic approaches to literary food studies. Taken together, the volume traces the effervescent interchange between literature and emerging (or rapidly changing) culinary scenes; highlights recipes as a key medium of literary experimentation and gender formation as well as subversion; explores food production and food insecurity as unfinished sites of anti-colonial struggle as

well as contemporary activism and horror; and showcases literature as a crucial site for at once exploring and vexing the relationship between identity and food.

New Culinary and Literary Scenes

The medieval world's power plays and politics emerged in and out of banquets: "power was edible, sovereignty recognized as culinary privilege, conduct measured in terms of the shared meal," as Aaron Hostetter argues in his chapter on "Medieval Feasts" (Chapter 1). While we might be inclined to read the elaborate feasting detailed in texts like the *Alliterative Morte Arthure* as mere literary fancy or minor background detail, Hostetter points out that medieval historical texts record similarly lavish, multi-sensory meals and a range of literary texts, from Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* to *Havelok* and the mystic writings of Julian of Norwich, underscore medieval culture's attentiveness to the cultural capital latent in food – not that we are what we eat so much as we become to the world by what we are seen to eat. In tracking both the carefully choreographed pageantry of aristocratic tables and concerns about hygienic practices in public kitchens, Hostetter shows how medieval food became a vehicle for sharp literary satire and shrewd literary figuration.

The revolution in taste which occurred during the early decades of the nineteenth century went beyond the poetic experimentations of Romantic writers such as William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and was as much a literal phenomenon as a literary one, as Denise Gigante points out in her chapter, "The Romantic Revolution in Taste" (Chapter 3). Gigante reminds us that gastronomy emerges at this moment and involved a critical overturning of the philosophical hierarchy of the senses, countering Enlightenment taste philosophers who privileged sight over gustation and divorced aesthetic discrimination from the body. She surveys how William Hazlitt sought to define this new "gustatory aesthetics" in his essays and the ways that John Keats embraced this full-bodied aesthetic in his poetry. And she argues that William Lamb's epicurean essay, "A Dissertation Upon Roast Pig" and Percy Bysshe Shelley's treatise on vegetarianism, *A Vindication of Natural Diet*, reflect not only the moment when the emerging institutions of gastronomic culture – restaurants, tasting juries, food journalism, dining clubs – fundamentally resituated the role of somatic taste in everyday life and aesthetic practice, but also the ways the revolutionary ferment of the French revolution catalyzed new concern for the sufferings animals endured for human pleasure.

Food has long been treated as potential poison or fondest indulgence in Anglo-American children's literature, as Catherine Keyser points in her

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chapter, “Guilty Pleasures in Children’s Literature” (Chapter 10). Keyser focuses her essay on the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, a moment when the changing landscape of food – in particular, the emergence of factory farming, industrialized foods, artificial flavors, nutrition science, and psychoanalysis – profoundly impacted the stories children’s literature would come to tell about the pleasures and dangers of eating. She tracks how turn-of-the-century literature such as *The Secret Garden* and *Mary Poppins* aimed at controlling children’s appetites, while African American writers such as Langston Hughes and Paul Laurence Dunbar worked to counter the edibility of African American bodies in their writing on and for African American children. Keyser argues that food insecurity and scarcity during the Depression and World War II sharpened the depictions of childhood poverty and regional foodways in texts like Lois Lenski’s *Spinach Boy* and Helen Kay’s *Battle in the Barnyard*. In turn, animals gorging on “just the leavings” in E.B. White’s *Charlotte’s Web* points to postwar US overabundance, a period which notably coincides with the emergence of a new character in US children’s literature – the picky eater. But she also explores how increasing nostalgia for rapidly disappearing foodways in texts like the *Little House on the Prairie* series document small-scale farming and food production processes on their way out.

Culinary Experimentation and the Literature of Cookbooks

Joe Moshenska’s “The Art of Early Modern Cookery” (Chapter 2) examines the ways that Early Modern recipe culture allowed women space to participate in literary experimentation and suggests that culinary expertise engaged experimental knowledge in ways that make it best read as crucially part of, rather than simply coincidentally adjacent to, the Scientific Revolution taking place in this period. Illuminating key cultural shifts which shaped the way that cooking and eating came to be bound up with the reading and writing of early modern literature in ways that provoked delight and anxiety – among them, religious debates about the Eucharist, colonial expansion (and with it, new tastes, ingredients, labor), changing etiquette, and new understandings of the body and digestion – Moshenska then focuses his attention on the evocations of food and culinary matters in the writings of Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle and John Milton. He argues that where Cavendish drew on food to craft her authorial persona and distance herself from precisely the contemporary domestic and philosophical figures with whom she might have been identified, Milton’s use of food even more intimately reveals and reconfigures the connection between eating and knowledge.

In the early nineteenth century, sales of cookbooks such as *Apicius Redivivus, or the Cook's Oracle* (1817) began to exceed that of literary celebrities like Lord Byron and Sir Walter Scott, as Denise Gigante reminds us in this volume, and this publishing trend only gained further momentum in the decades that followed. As Kate Thomas points out in "The Culinary Landscape of Victorian Literature" (Chapter 5) Victorian cookbooks like Isabella Beeton's *Book of Household Management* (1859) became runaway bestsellers, selling sixty thousand copies in its first year alone. Thomas argues that Beeton's success points both to her clever adaptations of recent innovations in the form of cookery books and the way reconfigurations of gender in the wake of industrialization led to an ever-growing market for commercial cookbooks. But she also suggests that a new relationship between eating and reading emerges in the Victorian era. Realist novels lingered over what their characters were eating while influential novelists such as Thackeray and Dickens authored recipes and reviewed cookbooks. The rise of restaurants led to menus of novel-like proportions, the emergence of plate-glass windows invited Victorian passers-by to be voyeurs at the dining of others, and, as Thomas argues, eating itself become episodic through the introduction of courses brought to the table sequentially, unexpectedly mirroring the period's penchant for serialized reading.

Cookbooks once again became a key site of literary experimentation in the early to mid-twentieth century, as Allison Carruth traces for us in her chapter on "Modernism and Gastronomy" (Chapter 6). Gastronomy emerges in the nineteenth century as a popular print cultural form whose epicenter was Paris, and as Carruth points out, it is best understood as a capacious frame rather than a singular genre, encompassing guidebooks, manuals, treatises, memoirs, and restaurant reviews. The turn to the twentieth century saw at once an explosion of gastronomic writing and an increasingly strong reaction against anything that smacked of bourgeois food cultures by experimental writers and artists ranging from modernist writers such as Virginia Woolf, Marcel Proust, and Gertrude Stein to later EAT/Flexus artists in the 1960s. Carruth reads F.T. Marinetti's critique of Italian culinary traditions in *The Futurist Cookbook* (1932) as an anti-gastronomy manifesto as well as an experiment in rethinking the boundaries of the cookbook form, arguing that its mix of weird, impossible to recreate recipes, polemical musings, and spectacles from the Futurist test kitchen in Turin ultimately "unravel the recipe form" by short-circuiting knowledge sharing or reproducibility in the service of what Carruth terms "steel-powered nationalism." By contrast, M.F.K Fisher's *How To Cook a Wolf* (1942), which draws on modernist modes such as non-linear narrative, montage, and irony, emerges in her reading as an experimental culinary text which both celebrates gastronomic pleasure and meditates on the material

scarcity of wartime food rationing and, with it, the uneven distribution of wartime hunger. In so doing, it counters narratives of shared national sacrifice, something Carruth argues modernist writer Lorine Niedicker similarly takes up at length in her *New Goose* poems.

My chapter, “Cold War Cooking” (Chapter 7), turns to Julia Child’s role in the “hot kitchen” of Cold War culture, and her unlikely repurposing of the trans-national domestic front in her iconic 1961 cookbook, *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*. Recent commentators have suggested that the OSS researcher, food writer, TV celebrity, and domestic goddess single-handedly “re-outfitted the American kitchen and re-educated the American palate.” But when Julia arrived in France in 1948, the country was scarred by war and reeling from deprivation – was, in other words, far from a foodie paradise. Child’s memoirs reveal her keen awareness of postwar scarcity, and the postwar politics of being an American in Paris in the age of both McCarthy and the Marshall Plan. Reading *My Life in France* alongside *Mastering* and Child’s collected letters, I uncover how her work to translate French cuisine for an American audience pivotally upended Cold War domestic ideology, countering narratives of American modernity and postwar abundance with visions of French leisure, luxury, and culinary extravagance.

Erica Fretwell explores African American women’s cookbooks as an important, all too often overlooked, genre of African American’s women’s writing in her chapter, “Black Power in the Kitchen” (Chapter 12). Charting the genre from two seminal postbellum texts, Malinda Russell’s *A Domestic Cook Book* (1866) and Abby Fisher’s *What Mrs. Fisher Knows about Old Southern Cooking* (1881) through to the emergence of community cookbooks in the early twentieth century and experimental, Black Power-influenced cookbooks in the 1970s, Fretwell argues that African American women’s cookbooks are not only a key space where foods, social formations and politics are cooked up, but also a vital site of African American literary experimentation. She recovers how the cookbook form offered a prime vehicle to authorship for African American women in the post-Civil War period, and crucially countered the Mammy stereotype and cultural images that represented the culinary skills of African American cooks as mere instinct rather than art. She then turns to the ways collaboratively authored community cookbooks embraced domestic science and moved away from southern dishes in their project of culinary-social uplift and assimilation. By contrast, the rise of black nationalism in the 1970s led African American cookbook authors such as Vertamae Smart-Grosvenor in *Vibration Cooking* (1970) to embrace diasporic foodstuffs and a new mode of culinary writing – merging memoir, history, and poetry. Such radical culinary experimentation, Fretwell argues, allowed the inclusion and

framing of traditional American recipes such as “So-called ‘Indian’ Pudding” to function as powerful critiques of New World colonial violence and slavery.

With the emergence of food blogging in 1999, and the stratospheric success of Julie Powell’s 2002 blog, *The Julie/Julia Project*, the cookbook has found new life in virtual form. Food blogs mirror older cookbook forms by featuring autobiographical writing alongside recipes and drawing on the stylized food photography first popularized in mid-twentieth century culinary magazines and cookbooks. But as Emily Contois takes up in, “Blogging Food, Performing Gender” (Chapter 16), they are also a notably more interactive genre, with reader likes and comments sharpening the previously largely only implied relationship between recipe author and reader. Where much recent scholarship on food blogs focuses on women readers and bloggers, and argues that they represent a post-feminist embrace of retrograde forms of domesticity, Contois’ chapter attends instead to the ways food blogs – specifically, those geared to the demarcation, celebration, and preparation of “dude food” – shape conflicting visions of contemporary masculinity in US culture.

Farm Horror and Agricultural Activism

The history of taste, as Parama Roy takes up in her chapter, “Postcolonial Tastes” (Chapter 11), is deeply intertwined with the history (and horror) of empire: medieval and early modern taste for exotic spices drove New World expansion, much as the growing demand for sugar across Europe drove the Atlantic slave trade. In turn, colonial policies led to and exacerbated famine in India and Ireland in the eighteenth century and beyond. Roy highlights that food and its lack unsurprisingly figure prominently in a variety of postcolonial texts – from memoirs such as Sara Suleri’s *Meatless Days* (1989) and Wole Soyinka’s *Aké: The Years of Childhood* (1981) to novels such as Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* (1981), Tsitsi Dangarembga’s *Nervous Conditions* (1988), Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things* (1996), and Monique Truong’s *Book of Salt* (2003) – but notes alimentary matters have until recently received scant attention from literary critics. Parsing a variety of ways postcolonial writers mobilize this ecology of alimentation, Roy underscores both the significance of hunger as a vital site of figuring and enacting anti-colonial protest, and cannibalism as a trope for Caribbean writers to rethink their relationship to the global North and theorize new ways of eating well.

Jonathan Bishop Highfield’s chapter, “Postcolonial Foodways in Contemporary African Culture” (Chapter 15), is similarly interested in the ways that empire is enmeshed in food and foodways, most particularly, the colonial policies which caused food insecurity and hunger in Africa, forced

labor on farms, and ongoing agricultural dispossession. He reminds us that the Anti-Apartheid struggle in South Africa was crucially also a story of alimentary precarity and exploitation: Mandela championed peasant farmers removed from their lands, women who had been arrested for brewing and selling beer, and prison laborers forced to work on potato farms. Contemporary African novels insistently attend to agriculture, cooking, and eating in order to showcase, as Highland argues, “the traumas of history, the emptiness of displacement [or exile or diaspora], and the power of community.” Focusing in particular on NoViolet Bulawayo’s *We Need New Names*, Rozena Maart’s *Rosa’s District 6*, and Aminatta Forna’s *Ancestor Stones*, he uncovers how these texts also reveal buried food histories, such as the food diversity and resistance to racial classification that existed in the mixed race community that existed in District Six until the community was razed by bulldozers, and the food overabundance and waste encountered in exile.

Michael Newbury and Sarah D. Wald offer us intriguing counter-takes on the depiction of US agricultural labor in American fiction and film, interrogating contemporary nostalgia for older agricultural modes and the horrors of industrialized farming as well as exploited farm labor. American culture has long mythologized the agrarian lifestyle and agricultural labor, but more recently journalists such as Michael Pollan and Eric Schlosser have exposed the dark side of contemporary agribusiness. In “Farm Horror in the Twentieth Century” (Chapter 8), Newbury shows this story starts at the turn of the twentieth century, in naturalist fiction and early films, which return us again and again to scenes of the horrific costs of industrialized farming. In turn, he suggests a crucial shift from gothic horror situated in dark castles to the horror of remote farmhouses and fields, a shift he identifies as the twentieth century turn to what he terms “farm horror,” a privileged site for “supernatural horror bound to the rise of agriculture’s industrialization,” a trope he traces through Upton Sinclair’s *The Jungle* (1906), Frank Norris’s *The Octopus*, H.P. Lovecraft’s “haunted New England hinterlands,” Capote’s *In Cold Blood* and 1970s slasher films such as *Children of the Corn*.

Wald’s chapter, “Farmworker Activism,” argues that US agricultural literature, from Wendell Berry to contemporary agribusiness exposés, most often focuses its attention on farmers and small-scale land owners pitted against large-scale industrial farms, but in the process this literature too often ignores those who work but don’t own the land. She argues that, by contrast, US farmworker literature, from Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath* to more recent literature emerging from the United Farmworkers of America movement, draws attention to the “intertwined economic, emotional, and environmental violence of contemporary food production” – the dangers of pesticides to worker and consumer bodies, the inequities in the food system

that leave marginalized farm workers subject to hunger and food insecurity, and the food ads that deftly erase the back-breaking labor that produced the foods we eat. Wald's reading of novels such as Helena Viramontes' *Under the Feet of Jesus* (1995) suggests farmworker literature also powerfully figure farmworkers as crucial, under-appreciated "conveyors of environmental knowledge."

Reforming and Unforming Culinary Identities

At least since the 1796 publication of Amelia Simmons's *American Cookery*, cookbooks and household manuals have functioned as a key site for the formation and demarcation of American identity – a battleground for reining in unruly appetites, inventing a national cuisine, and assimilating indigenous and immigrant tastes to American fare. Lauren Klein's chapter, "The Matter of Early American Taste" (Chapter 4), turns to the literary and cultural campaign that took place in the early decades of the nineteenth century to make Thanksgiving at once a national holiday and a US origin story as a way to think about literature's role in cultivating a unified American taste in a gastronomic as well as cultural sense. Prior the Civil War, the holiday was celebrated across New England, but it fell on different days in different places and its meaning was far from fixed. As Klein reminds us, Lincoln fixed the date as the last Thursday in November at the behest of prominent author and editor, Sarah Josepha Hale, who worked not just to make the holiday a "truly American festival" but also to launch "a philosophy that linked the sense of taste, as expressed through food and eating, to the expression of republican values and ideals." Klein traces how Hale, in her 1829 novel, *Northwood: Life North and South*, elaborately details the civic significance of each food associated with Thanksgiving, while at the same time working to canonize a particularly regional—particularly New England—version of that meal. She argues that Hale's contemporary, prominent author, editor, and activist Lydia Maria Child, similarly uses food and the table as crucial ingredients of her political fiction, deliberately enshrining the regional tastes of New England as the preeminently American fare, and adaptation to them as a key litmus test for assimilation and Americanization. But she uncovers how stories such as "Willie Wharton," crucially imagine that both Willie and his Native American wife, A-lee-lah, are capable of "internalizing appropriately 'American' standards of taste" while also pushing the boundaries of what fits into that culinary and social category.

Katharina Vester's chapter, "Queering the Cookbook" (Chapter 9), furthers this story by tracking the normative, disciplining function of early American cookbooks, which taught American readers how to cultivate the culinary and sexual self-discipline thought to be required of citizens of the new republic. But

she also shows how late nineteenth and twentieth century American writers began to challenge those culinary and societal norms, queering the cookbook form and drawing on food imagery in a variety of literary forms – from the western and hardboiled detective fiction to Bessie Smith’s blues lyrics and *Playboy’s* 1953 cooking column – to express tabooed sexual desires and identities. Turning to Alice B. Toklas’s culinary memoir, *The Alice B. Toklas Cookbook* (1954), Vester argues that Toklas drew on the cookbook form to present readers with a portrait of lesbian domestic life when few such portraits existed in mid-century US culture, and importantly re-framed recipes as “subjective experiences” rather than prescriptive, imperative forms. Surveying a variety of more recent LGBTQ cookbooks, she highlights how cookbooks became an important site for inscribing non-normative erotic desires into mainstream American culture.

As Anne Anlin Cheng takes up in her chapter, “Digesting Asian America” (Chapter 14), Asian Americanness and the Asian foodways which they bring and are often figured to represent have long been linked in the American popular imaginary. Yet little work has been done on Asian American food and literature other than to point out its ubiquity, the way that eating has played a key role in Asian American literature from Louis Chu’s *Eat a Bowl of Tea* (1961), Jessica Hagedorn’s *Dogeaters* (1990), Amy Tan’s *The Joy Luck Club* (1989) to Monique Troung’s *The Book of Salt* (2003). But in calling for a reconsideration of the way Asian American writers have engaged the relationship between food, consumption and Asianness, Cheng is most interested in texts which don’t reinforce eating as an expression of – or key marker for – identity, instead calling for us to attend to those which deeply destabilize the relationship between the matter of race and food. Focusing on a text which does not overtly concern itself with racial naming, Chang-rae Lee’s 2014 post-apocalyptic novel, *On Such A Full Sea*, she traces how the non-comestible pet, the edible animal, and the consuming human come to contaminate (or become indistinguishable from) one another. And she argues that Lee’s depiction of food and ecological crisis ultimately forces us to rethink, as she puts it, “our easy assumptions about racial-ethnic identity and the corporeal integrity that presumably substantiates [it].”

Notes

1. Molly Wizenburg, *A Homemade Life: Stories and Recipes from My Kitchen Table* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2009), 1.
2. Elizabeth Robins Pennel, *My Cookery Books* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1903), 5.
3. See Susan J. Leonardi, “Recipes for Reading: Summer Pasta, Lobster à la Riseholme, and Key Lime Pie,” *PMLA* 104.3 (1989), 340–7 and Kyla Wazana Tompkins,

- “Consider the Recipe,” *J19: The Journal of Nineteenth-Century Americanists* 1.2 (2013), 439–45. For a further discussion of the rise of literary scholarship on cookbooks, see Erica Fretwell’s chapter in this volume.
4. For a further discussion of the founding of NYU’s Department of Nutrition and Food Studies, see Marion Nestle’s reflections in “Writing the Food Studies Movement,” *Food, Culture & Society* 13:2 (2010), 159–79.
 5. Marian Nestle, “Claude Levi-Strauss Dies at 100.” Food Politics (blog) November 6, 2009, www.foodpolitics.com/tag/levi-schiff/.
 6. See Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Mythologique* (vol. 1): *The Raw and the Cooked*, trans. John and Doreen Weightman (London: Jonathan Cape, 1969).
 7. See Mary Douglas, “Deciphering a Meal,” *Daedalus* 101.1 (1972), 61–81.
 8. See Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985).
 9. See Sidney Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York: Elizabeth Sifton Books/Viking, 1985).
 10. For a further discussion of this publishing trend, see Parama Roy’s chapter in this volume and Bruce Robbins, “Commodity Histories,” *PMLA* 120.2 (2005), 454–63.
 11. Roland Barthes, “Wine and Milk,” *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, [1957] London: Jonathan Cape, 1972), 61.
 12. Joseph Bohling, *The Sober Revolution: Appellation Wine and the Transformation of France* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2018), 199.
 13. Jonathan Culler, “Review of *Mythologies*,” *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, 4.2 (1973), 171.
 14. Ibid., 171.
 15. On gastronomy and the upending of traditional sensory hierarchies (as well as reconfigurations of taste as a somatic as well as gustatory form of aesthetic discrimination), see Denise Gigante’s *Taste: A Literary History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005). On the unexpectedly edible registers of race in US literature and culture, see Kyla Wazana Tompkins’ *Racial Indigestion: Eating Bodies in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: New York University Press, 2012) and, most recently, Catherine Keyser’s *Artificial Color: Food and Modern Racial Fictions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018). On empire – and the writing of and after it – as necessarily alimentary matters, see Parama Roy’s *Alimentary Tracts: Appetites, Aversions and the Postcolonial* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009), Anita Mannur’s *Culinary Fictions: Food in South Asian Diasporic Culture* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2009), and Njeri Githire, *Cannibal Writes: Eating Others in Caribbean and Indian Ocean Women’s Writing* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2014).

I

AARON K. HOSTETTER

Medieval Feasts

From feasts to fashion, awareness of the medieval quotidian has proven vital to interpreting its literature. Authors and audiences may yearn for transcendence, only to find it rooted to the social world of practice. As Jill Mann reminds us in 1979, a time when patristic, theologically grounded schools of criticism seemed predominant: “The material world is not merely a vehicle for expressing the immaterial, but on the contrary contains the heart of its meaning and its mystery.”¹ Allegory is bound inextricably to its literal level. Without a text there is no meaning to be hidden, and these signifiers are derived from everyday practice. Circumstances of existence – material details, everyday life – pervade author, text, and audience alike, and these are crucial to bridging the interpretive gap between then and now.

Such is the rationale undergirding Caroline Walker Bynum’s magisterial study *Holy Feast and Holy Fast* (1987), the first statement of a nascent medieval food studies. Seeking a cultural explanation for food miracles and extended fasting practices of (mostly) female saints – often surviving for years eating nothing but the Eucharist – Bynum locates these astonishing ideas in the context of culinary practices of Christian medieval society and its cycle between fast and feast. Power and luxury are often expressed in these practices and rituals, an acknowledgment of humanity’s dominion over an edible Earth.² Bynum suggests that an alternate power is articulated through inedia, the refusal to eat. Self-sacrifice is inherent to that, giving up God’s bounty in his praise – yet to refuse to eat is also to challenge the material circumstances that bind us all and limit our potential. Through practices modern society often pathologizes as disordered eating, these holy women question the nature of the body, of femininity culturally circumscribed by the physical.³ Bynum’s groundbreaking argument could only be made in full awareness of medieval food practices, in order to understand how religious devotion appropriates that realm. Thus begins the study of food in medieval culture.

Bynum’s basic idea aligns with Mann’s earlier challenge: Both see that life in a materially bound, economically constrained world requires an awareness of

food and its commodified signifiers, its ornate assemblage, and its all-encompassing networks. In market-based social structures, not to recognize objects and their implications smacks of naiveté, and we are becoming more cognizant of how the medieval and modern worlds share a similar degree of consumer discernment. Characterizations via material objects and practices are rife throughout Chaucer's *General Prologue* (ca. 1390s), only beginning to be explored by critics. The narrator's observations of his various pilgrims often hinge upon their significant interactions with the goods around them. The Franklin in particular seems to achieve definition through an edible register:

Withoute bake mete was nevere his hous,
Of fisch and flessh, and that so plentevous
It snewed in his hous of mete and drynke;
Of alle deyntees that men koude thynke,
After the sondry sesons of the yeer,
So chaunged he his mete and his soper.
Ful many a fat partrich hadde he in muwe,
And many a breem and many a luce in stuwe
Wo was his cook but if his sauce were
Poyaunt and sharp, and redy al his geere.
His table dormant in his halle always
Stood redy covered al the longe day (I.343–54)⁴

As a non-aristocratic landowner, the Franklin seems completely defined by his embrace of the lordly duty to provide a mighty table. More than just “Epicurus owene sone” (I.336), he recognizes that sovereignty, as I have argued elsewhere, inheres in his ability to eat the best of what his riches allow him to obtain, and so there is more than mere abundance in his home.⁵ With pies and pastries and a limitless variety of fowl and fish to eat, food is not just overflowing, it is climatological: dazzling variety pours down from the sky. That amazes us, but possibly just as implausibly his dinner table stands “dormant in his halle alway,” ever prepared for yet another meal. Medieval houses, even the biggest and best, tended not to have established dining rooms and so tables for eating were placed on trestles, the surfaces stored when not in use. But not our Franklin: he is ready to viciual his guests at a moment's notice. These material details of eating practice communicate wealth and power, but perhaps also a measure of desperation, of over-compensation. As a rich member of the third estate, regardless of his power and importance, the Franklin will never be recognized as one of the peerage. His comfort in this world and sense of cultural distinction does not suffice to attain his social pretensions, and the meteorological, marvelous display in his home becomes a mournful remuneration for a status impossible to achieve.⁶

Courteous comportment at the table dominates the description of the patrician Prioress, head of a prestigious community of nuns, just as culinary display defines the Franklin:

At mete wel ytaught was she with alle;
 She leet no morsel from hir lippes falle,
 Ne wette hir fyngres in hir sauce depe;
 Wel koude she carie a morsel and wel kepe
 That no drope ne fille upon hire brest.
 In curteisie was set ful muchel hir lest.
 Hir over-lippe wyped she so clene
 That in hir coppe ther was no ferthyng sene
 Of grece, whan she dronken hadde hir draughte.
 Ful semely after hir mete she raughte (I.127–36)

Medieval dining practices required guests to pair up at the table and use a single plate, cup, and spoon between them – therefore mannerly expectations insisted that one not foul what must be shared. The Prioress' skillful and hygienic table manners are a sign of meticulous living and assiduous self-control, but much more as well. These behaviors practically communicate the lofty status of the convent she runs, a suitable house in which to place a high-status relative. Far from a subtle condemnation of her worldliness, Chaucer locates the fundamental importance of courtesy in worlds both monastic and aristocratic. Belonging to the social realm means conforming to polite expectations at the table, and the crucial importance of having of tidy manners are handed down to us through myriad courtesy manuals extant in many different manuscripts, such as the collection found in the important Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Ashmole 61 miscellany (compiled mid-fifteenth century).⁷ Most of these guides to right acting linger upon behavior at the table, as good dining conduct makes up the field of the struggle to domesticate humanity.⁸

Another pilgrim defined by dining practice is the Squire. The list of his qualities, both military and romantic, culminates by citing his prescribed role in the banquet hall, as the carver of meat: “Curteis he was, lowely, and servysable, / And carf biforn his fader at the table” (I.99–100), a description nearly repeated verbatim of Squire Damian in the *Merchant’s Tale* (IV.1773). The formulaic repetition implies carving’s ritualistic nature in the feast hall, of squires playing their socially expected role in their households. Cutting meat is a vital part of the display of noble decorum, a set of bodily practices and verbal instructions that link repetitions of the feasting routine in time and across the space of social class, that is, in its performance by all lordly diners. The high importance of the carver as a culinary necessity calls into question many of the assumptions made by early critics of medieval food.

Depending only on the extant cookbooks of the period, one might conclude that the mortar and pestle, rather than the knife, was the primary instrument of medieval cuisine, as does W. E. Mead in 1931: “Out of the mortar came the impalpable messes so characteristic of the medieval table. Nearly every dish, whatever its name, was soft and mushy . . .”⁹ Alfred Franklin, no doubt accustomed to the standards of French *haute cuisine*, calls these blended and ground creations “abominables ragoûts.”¹⁰ These cookbooks are indeed highly elaborate, conveying recipe after recipe for ostentatious and finely prepared foods and sauces, heavily dependent on exotic spices brought from afar, and nearly all reduced to near-pastes by their subjection to mortar or straining cloth.¹¹ It is not hard to deduce after seeing a concatenation of these fancy preparations that not only did medieval diners prefer the overly processed but also that the poor state of their teeth may have required it.¹² However, more recent research has indicated that the cookbooks of the medieval era do not serve in the exact way as they do now, communicating a sum total of nutritional possibilities to a domestic, amateur chef. Barbara Santich notes that these guidebooks are written in a “culinary shorthand” familiar to the professionally trained chefs who were their primary audience, and that they serve mostly as an “aide mémoire” for users who already know the basic details and techniques involved.¹³ Consequently, roasted meats and fish would not have needed to be listed in these cookbooks, yet these dishes formed the basic foundation upon which any status meal was based.

With roasts assuming pride of place in the sequence of courses, and a lack of forks used for individual dining (these were not adopted until around the eighteenth century), the services of the carver were essential to share these roasts among the guests. This all-important task was highly standardized and subject to an elaborate set of instructions. This sharing ritual was described by a lively set of technical jargon, as listed in Wynkyn de Worde’s early printed *Boke of Keruynge* (1508):

Breke that dere
lesche þ[at] brawne
rere that goose
lyft that swanne
sauce that capon
spoyle that henne
frusshe that chekyn
vnbrace that mallard
vnlace that cony (1–9)¹⁴

The presence of these “termes of a keruer” suggest both verbal propriety but also an exacting set of physical procedures needed to do the task properly,

many steps to be precisely observed.¹⁵ The carver plays the central role in convivial sovereignty. Therefore, it is fitting that Chaucer keeps returning to this figure as a reflection of aristocratic living.

Not every reference to cuisine in the *Canterbury Tales* is wholesome and edifying. Beyond the unavoidable leftovers of digestion (farting in the *Summoner's Tale*, the public privy of the *Priores' Tale*, urination in the *Miller's*), any invocation of food implies its eventual spoilage, subject to natural processes. This close kinship of food states leads Claude Lévi-Strauss to propose the famous “Culinary Triangle” setting all things edible into a triangular continuum between the raw, the cooked, and the rotten, and suggesting a fundamental movement between natural and cultured conditions in a society’s imagination.¹⁶ This constant movement is suggested in the downward progression of propriety found in the First Fragment of the *Canterbury Tales* (from the *General Prologue* to the *Cook's Tale*), as argued by Kathryn Lynch.¹⁷ She locates a tension in these first five texts between the “cooked” and refined ideology of the *Knight's Tale* to increasing anarchization and disruption through the tales that follow, reaching its nadir in the figure of the Cook, the craftsman who literally makes the Knight’s world possible, but whose fascinations with a seamy London underworld render his concoction inedible, and unable to be stomached for a single bite.

It seems disturbingly appropriate that the Cook represent the rotten in this ethical degradation. He is a scurrilous figure only present on the pilgrimage in order to serve his wealthy Guildsmen clients (I.379). His extensive knowledge of cuisine is much impaired by his awful “mormal” – an ulcerous sore on his shin (I.386), and his tale promises (though cannot deliver) something much more unsavory than fabliau ribaldry or tales of raping clerks. In the prologue to this tale, the Host Harry Bailly encourages our suspicions by citing the Cook’s dismal reputation and the disquieting condition of his London cookshop:

Now telle on, Roger – looke that it be good,
For many a pastee hastow laten blood,
And many a Jakke of Dovere hastow soold
That hath been twies hoot and twies coold.
Of many a pilgrym hastow Cristes curs,
For of thy perçely yet they fare the wors,
That they han eten with thy stubbel goos,
For in thy shoppe is many a flye loos. (4345–52)

The sanitary conditions in this establishment do not inspire confidence. Roger the Cook is said to “bleed” his pastries (like the “Jack of Dover”) of their contents, and then rebake the pie shell to fill it with the older gravy and meat, continually reheated until sold. And even the parsley accompanying

the geese he roasts is foul. Such non-hygienic conditions dominate modern assumptions of medieval cuisine, and might seem to reinforce the long-standing myth about the role of spices as cover for spoiled meat. However, these conditions are invoked not because they must have been the rule, but because medieval city ordinances prohibited many of these practices.¹⁸ Therefore, food safety was well understood as a public health requirement (its absence cause for the Cook to be cursed by pilgrims' ailing stomachs). Also, cookshops such as Roger's were not known to be luxury establishments – in fact they were the usual source of food for the urban poor, as their tenement flats usually did not have kitchen facilities due to the risk of fire.¹⁹ Such humble, sometimes squalid, conditions were unlikely to be amended by the addition of spices, worth more than gold, and decidedly not to be encountered in such cut-rate establishments. At any rate, spoiled meat, no matter how highly spiced, will still give the eater food poisoning, and so the myth gets it absolutely wrong. Spices were much in demand for very different reasons.²⁰ Here, and in many other places in the *Canterbury Tales*, culinary reflections give characters crisp definition and create opportunities for irony and satire as well keen social observations.

However, in Chaucer's works not only character is established by attention to culinary detail but also lyric pathos. Overwrought affectivity, fundamental to Petrarchan love lyrics, seems exploited for increasingly comic effect in the short poem "To Rosemounde" (composed perhaps in the 1370s), which crowns its ultimate stanza in a bizarre culinary image: "Nas never pyk walwed in galauntyne / As I in love am walwed and ywounde" (17–18). Here the inept veers sharply into the ludicrous. The reader is served this grotesque simile, tossed in undignified language: The narrator in love resembles a big roasted fish that seems to "wallow" in its gelatinous sauce. This was a well-known dish, a common trick of the table, a pike covered with translucent galantine that gives it the appearance of swimming in water. Recipes are commonly found for this witty sort of illusion food:

Auter pike in Galentyne. ¶ Take browne brede, and stepe it in a quarte of vinegre, and a pece of wyne for a pike, and quarteren of pouder canell, and drawe it thorgh a streynour skilfully thik, and cast it in a potte, and lete boyle; and cast there-to pouder peper, or ginger, or of clowes, and lete kele. And þen take a pike, and seth him in good sauce, and take him vp, and him kele a litol; and ley him in a boll for to cary him yn; and cast þe sauce vnder him and aboue him, that he be al y-hidde in þe sauce; and cary him wheþer euer þou wolt.²¹

The culinary detail drives home the poem's message – that the narrator is abjected in love service, fit not to serve his lady but to be served to her,

physically slathered in his emotions. The image of spectacular food crystallizes the masochistic and perverse energies of courtly love, of lovers willing themselves to suffer and sicken in unattainable yearning. In a delicious shift of register, Chaucer diagnoses the diseased fantasy that mobilizes so much literary output, hundreds of years before the fad would finally come to an end.

Fish imagery is easy to come by, the product both fantastic and fundamental to an island economy. This staple could never be far from the imagination of medieval writers, who were obligated to eat it several times per week in observance of fasting requirements. The ubiquity of finned cuisine led to economic prosperity, as fishery grew into an important industry. And so it should not surprise us to find fish catalogued as the foundation of power and sovereignty in the romance of dispossession and restoration known as *Havelok* (ca. 1295):

Grim was fishere swithe god,
And mikel couthe on the flod –
Mani god fish therinne he tok,
Bothe with neth and with hok.
He tok the sturgiun and the qual,
And the turbut and lax withal;
He tok the sele and the hwel –
He spedde ofte swithe wel.
Keling he tok and tumberel,
Hering and the makerel,
The butte, the schulle, the thornebake (750–60)

Havelok's foster-father, the humble Grim, comes to the shores of Lincolnshire and draws his means of survival out of the water, rendering these commodities nameable through his skill and effort. The family, including its royal exile, thrives, and they root the prosperity of Grimsby, the town founded in his name. More than that, the catalogue serves to celebrate the products of the region, tying them to the successes of the burgeoning nation, a synecdoche of English power. More than just Gothic amplification, this moment serves as a lesson in the true power of English political economy for a young *Havelok* destined to become its king, a primer in production and exchange.²²

Fish was an everyday fact of living, a staple of existence just as much as bread, part of the domestic experience of life. Theologian, anchoress, and mystic Julian of Norwich (1342?–1416) could rely on its imagery to communicate the power of her prophetic visions, its quotidian presence the essence of her powerful recognition of God as “homely” – familiar and

kindred, intimate with humanity.²³ An early vision finds her staring at a crucifix held before her face as she lies deathly ill in bed, and she sees actual blood flowing from Christ's graven wounds. But rather than be terrified, she is fascinated by the sight and is led to muse to about the nature of divine presence in keenly materialistic terms:

The plentuoshede is lyke to the droppes of water that falle of the evesyng of an howse after a grete shower of reyne, that falle so thycke that no man may nomber them with no bodely wyt. And for the roundnesse they were lyke to the scale of heryng in the spredyng of the forhede.²⁴

In their rainy abundance, the drops of blood she observes maintain their round, individual character, a multiplication of the minutely particular, an infinity of signification. The acute detail recalls to her the scales of a herring, familiar to anyone working in the kitchen. Before certain fish can be eaten, the scales must be scraped off, and so the kitchen surfaces would be littered afterwards with these little discs, each shimmeringly iridescent, sticking to whatever they touch, almost impossible to wipe away. A mess to be sure, but also a sign of sufficiency, of domestic circles finding fulfillment in the edible, a household well fed. The homeliness of Christ pervades intimate spaces, cherishes its habitation of the lowly and the serviceable, and draws flame in humble similes. The tiniest manifestations of creation, the detritus of everyday life so easily overlooked or ignored, speak whole realms of salvation in Julian's powerful visions.

The religious requirement to fast from meat on a regular basis was meant as deprivation although, as our toothy friend wallowing in galentine above shows us, these fish dishes were imaginatively elaborated by clever cooks to make the requirement not seem so onerous. Gawain's first meal at Hautdesert, in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (ca. 1390), dazzles him in the variety and rarity of the many fish dishes he is served, and his compliments are met with sly depreciation: "Pis penaunce now ȝe take / And eft hit schal amende" (897–8).²⁵ Here intention and effect are crossed, almost at dueling purposes. Gawain graciously commends the kitchen, amazing in its accomplishments, but the servants remind him of an important fact. Technically, it is a fast day, and one was supposed to approach it in a religious spirit, but the servants and retainers cunningly reveal an irony of aristocratic life. Strict literality was deemed enough: Medieval cookbooks are rife with dishes that literally adhere to fasting requirements, but that imitate proscribed "meat" dishes by using fish or vegetable ingredients.²⁶

Whether occurring on feast days or fast, aristocratic life depended upon the practice of banqueting, as Chaucer's Franklin and Prioress recognize. The ostentatious, privileged consumption of the goods of the world, brought from

near and far, immediately communicate luxury and power. The domination of the noble classes over their economic circumstances is figured perfectly in the feast-hall. And these consuming forms of power only grew in elaboration, expanding from their roots in the mead-hall conviviality imagined in *Beowulf* (ca. 700–1025), and growing toward new heights of sophistication. Food coheres social bodies, it sets their boundaries, and creates chains of sufficiency and dependence – and the one who sits at the high table lords over this circle of convivial existence, as Massimo Montanari confirms:

Although the banquet table expresses the identity of the group, it also expresses, within that context, the underlying relations of strength and power. Further, it expresses the “difference” of those who are not invited. A metaphor of the community, of its internal harmonies and external relations, the banquet table is the place of inclusion, as well as exclusion.²⁷

With sovereignty instantiated through largesse, banqueting practices achieved a highly complex synthesis of sensory gratifications. Music and “table-talk” greeted the ears. Rich colors in everything from tapestries to clothing – and even the food itself – gratified visual taste.²⁸ Perfumes and fragrances titillated the nose. And of course, the spicy cuisine satisfied the taste buds and provided a palette of textures. Banquets often blurred the lines between fantasy and reality: it was common practice, often recorded in later French chronicles, to stage equally fancy and involved “entremets” between courses (called “sotelties” in Middle English), multisensory spectacles that combined cuisine with stagecraft to titillate and thrill the banquet guests.²⁹ In fact, the entrance of the Green Knight to Arthur’s feast might be anticipatable as some sort of extravagant entremet.³⁰

The medieval world’s confrontation of Roman and Gothic culture is explicitly staged in culinary terms in the late romance, the *Alliterative Morte Arthure* (ca. 1400), in a highly ornate banquet setting described over the course of twenty-four lines. Arthur’s sophistication accrues in dense, alliterating staves that celebrate the richness of both food and language, outlining the cultural advancement of Britain. Though younger than Rome, and less decadent (see lines 222–6), Arthur’s kingdom is its ethical and economic twin, the mantle of *translatio imperii* already passed westward. Though ready to explode in bloody conflict, a claim to superiority is fought and won atop a trestle table.

One might believe the *Alliterative Morte Arthure*’s culinary elaboration mere embroidery, an effect of wordplay and romance exaggeration. However, records exist of equally magnificent feasts occurring in the Middle Ages. One late medieval English example found George Neville, at his installation as Archbishop of York in 1467, exalted in a truly Croesian

manner. The feast celebrating his accession to power lasted several days, and involved jaw-dropping expenditures, all carefully accounted for, collected in one of the first examinations of medieval cuisine.³¹ The catalogue of food items procured for the feast is extraordinary, including 18,000 game birds of various sorts – peacocks, swans, herons, pheasants, among others – thousands of pies and pasties, hundreds and hundreds of pigs, sheep, cows, and deer, and fish aplenty. The efforts of production must have been staggering, involving many kitchens and hundreds of laborers (the outlay of bread, the bulk of any medieval dinner, is not listed, and was surely vast). This expenditure becomes all the more amazing when we consider what each diner might actually consume: Even though there would have been numerous dishes served in up to three courses, each guest would have shared just a modest helping of each offering, just enough for a taste, to appreciate the skill of the chefs, hardly enough to stuff oneself full. And any banquet would have been required to feed a great number of people, from the lord to his guests (higher and lower), to the kitchen staff and household servants, and then the leftovers would be distributed by the almoner to the indigent waiting at the gates.³²

It is common in Chaucerian romance for the narrator to pointedly refuse to account for the dishes and service of the story's feasts (see for example, the *Squire's Tale*, V.63–75), a nod to the stereotyped French romance known to indulge in such descriptions, both in the narrative and in accompanying illustrations. Other English romances, like the *Alliterative Morte Arthur* above, were much more leisurely about such detail. The romance of *Havelok* often indulges in the content of its characters' meals, almost reassuring its readers that decorum was followed and nutritional needs were met by all, such as when the Danish lord Ubbe entertains a disguised Havelok (see 1723–36). The bizarre, anti-heroic tale of *Sir Gowther* (ca. 1400) also depends on the presence of the proper aristocratic feast, its protagonist consigned to a disgusting penitential regime, eating only what he can tear from the mouth of a dog, contrasted to the banqueting decorum above the table (see especially the A version, 349–60).³³

No examination of medieval literary food could be complete without at least acknowledging the allegorical – what Jill Mann argues is best fleshed out in consideration of the weight of material detail. We should not be surprised to find examinations of food in William Langland's epic dream-vision *Piers Plowman* (composed ca. 1363–87), an allegorical poem about an agricultural worker. In Passus XIII (B version), Will the Dreamer joins a poor pilgrim, Patience, to seek a charitable meal at the hall of Conscience. They are seated, per custom, at a side board while the honored guests sit upon the dais. Among these guests is a doctor of divinity, a friar, who partakes of Conscience's fare:

Conscience called after mete, and thanne cam Scripture
 And served hem thus soone of sondry metes manye –
 Of Austyn, of Ambrose, of alle the fourre Evangelistes:
Edentes et bibentes que apud eos sunt.
 Ac this maister ne his man no maner flessh eten,
 Ac thei eten mete of moore cost, mortrews and potages:
 Of that men mysownne thei made hem wel at ese. (B.XIII.37–42)

This friar is bound by the dietary restrictions of his order, which causes him to pass over the wholesome meats of Conscience's feast, derived from fundamental texts of Christian truth, here not just verbal but material – manuscript and dish both rendered from animal carcasses. The Biblical verse that follows ("Eating and drinking such things as they have" [Luke 10:7, Douay-Rheims]) is not just ironically deprecating, but a pointed critique of the friar. The passage comes from Jesus's instructions to the apostles to wander and preach the word, free of material possessions, part of the scriptural authority for the fraternal orders and their mendicancy. Jesus orders his followers to eat whatever the charitable house offers regardless of what it is. The idea is to be an unpicky eater, and licenses them to transcend previous dietary restrictions.³⁴

The doctor does not go hungry despite these requirements. Though he does not seem able to eat the simple roasts of the table, he will dine upon "mete of moore cost," dishes of greater value and effort, though just as equally based in forbidden meat. The mortrew, a stew of chicken and (imported) rice, heavily spiced, is just such a dish. The effort to procure and prepare such a dish is labelled "miswinning" by Will, an observation cognate with the Pardoner's castigation of glutinous cuisine:

How greet labour and cost is thee to fynde!
 Thise cookes, how they stampe, and streyne, and grynde,
 And turnen substaunce into accident
 To fulfille al thy likerous talent! (VI.537–40)

The Pardoner identifies culinary innovation as an engine of human inequity (see VI.517–20) and material confusion, transmogrifying commodities into new forms, hiding their essence, just to gratify human urges of curiosity and wonder. The doctor of divinity is equally obsessed by the "accident" of his food: so long as the dish does not look like meat, he will eat it, despite the fact that it costs much more, hardly a dish for a mendicant. At the side board, Patience and Will are enjoined to be satisfied with the "sour loaf" of "Agite penitenciam" (Do penance³⁵) (XIII.48), and Will is unable to hold back his disdain for such fraternal hypocrisy. Food has the power to make allegory into social critique.

The material existence of food and foodways – the practices, rituals, and nodes of production and exchange involved in food cultures – exert a mighty force upon the medieval texts that invoke their presence. Students and scholars have an obligation to understand these invocations and their implications – and the long spell of overlooking these culinary details is ripe to be amended. Seeking moral or allegorical interpretation without acknowledging its material bases is insufficient, and food is just one of these important connections to the world of practice. Allegory does not just favor the spiritual dimension of textuality: medieval culture recognized that it depends upon the body, upon the material. Without the physical world, there are no signifiers to express truth. Without carnal textuality there is no doctrine. Food culture also binds literature to its social order, connecting questions of political economy to human expression. To read food images culturally is to acknowledge written production in the lived experience of humans, their ideologies enmeshed within economic production. Ideals arise in partnership with materiality, both in medieval as well as in modern polities. For the medieval world, politics arose from the domestic banquet – power was edible, sovereignty recognized as culinary privilege, conduct measured in terms of the shared meal. Chaucer and other medieval authors acknowledge their material entanglement, even as they defend its entitlements or critique its excesses. We share this imbrication in our contemporary lives, and by recognizing our kinship to earlier cultures we may better diagnose and resolve the problems inherent in this late stage of capitalism and commodity culture.

Notes

1. Jill Mann, “Eating and Drinking in *Piers Plowman*,” *Essays and Studies* new series 32 (1979), 26–43 (27).
2. See my *Political Appetites: Food in Medieval English Romance* (Columbus, OH: The Ohio State University Press, 2017), 1–2, for the biblical terms of the gustatory domain of humanity.
3. Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1987), esp. chapter 9.
4. Quotations from Chaucer are taken from *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1987). The *Canterbury Tales* is cited by fragment and line.
5. In “Food, Sovereignty, and Social Order in *Havelok the Dane*,” *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 110 (2011), 53–77. I further explore its ramifications in *Political Appetites*.
6. See Pierre Bourdieu’s *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, translated by Richard Nice (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984) for a wealth of terminology useful to discuss class-based practices of social differentiation.

7. *Codex Ashmole 61: A Compilation of Popular Middle English Verse*, ed. George Shuffelton (Kalamazoo, MI: TEAMS series, Medieval Institute Publications, 2008).
8. Medieval scholars are correcting the periodizing narrative set forth by Norbert Elias in the *Civilizing Process*, most notably Jonathan Nicholls, in *The Matter of Courtesy: Medieval Courtesy Books and the Gawain-Poet* (London: D. S. Brewer, 1985).
9. W. E. Mead, *The English Medieval Feast* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1931), 57.
10. Alfred Franklin, *La Vie Privée d'Autrefois*, vol. 3 (Paris: Plon, 1889), 44.
11. Extant editions of cookbooks are numerous. See *Two Fifteenth-Century Cookery-Books*, ed. Thomas Austin, EETS os 91 (London: Oxford University Press, 1888) or *Curye on Inglysch*, ed. Constance Hieatt, EETS ss 8 (London: Oxford University Press, 1985), among others.
12. Without coffee, tea, or the mass use of sugar, medieval people ate few things that contribute to tooth decay, so many had much better teeth than one might assume.
13. Barbara Santich, "The Evolution of Culinary Techniques in the Medieval Era," in Melitta Weiss Adamson (ed.), *Food in the Middle Ages* (New York: Garland, 1995), 61–2.
14. Wynkyn de Worde, *The Boke of Keruynge*, in Frederick J. Furnivall (ed.), *The Babees Book*, EETS os 12 (reprinted New York: Greenwood, 1969), 265.
15. John Russell, in his *Boke of Nurture* (ca. 1450), outlines the process needed to carve venison, by cutting each slice into cubes and serving it with frumenty (a barley-based dish spiced with saffron) (in Furnivall, *Babees Book*, 141). The instructions are sufficiently detailed for Peter C. D. Brears to convey them in a series of illustrations (*Cooking and Dining in Medieval England* [Totnes, UK: Prospect, 2008], 461).
16. Claude Lévi-Strauss, "The Culinary Triangle," trans. Peter Brooks, *The Partisan Review* 33 (1966), 586–96.
17. Kathryn Lynch, "From Tavern to Pie Shop: The Raw, the Cooked, and the Rotten in Fragment 1 of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*," *Exemplaria* 19 (March 2007), 117–38. The only other article to focus on food in the *Canterbury Tales* is Elizabeth M. Biebel's "Pilgrims to Table: Food Consumption in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*," in Martha Carlin and Joel T. Rosenthal (eds.), *Food and Eating in Medieval Europe* (London: Hambledon, 1998), 15–26, though this study deals mostly with morality rather than material detail.
18. See Martha Carlin, "Fast Food and Urban Living Standards in Medieval England" in Carlin and Rosenthal, *Food and Eating*, 39–41.
19. Carlin, "Fast Food," 42.
20. The imaginative role of spices is examined in Timothy Morton's *The Poetics of Spice: Romantic Consumerism and the Exotic* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000) and Paul Freedman's *Out of the East: Spices and the Medieval Imagination* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008). One telling fact about spices' almost-mythical appeal is that the markets dropped sharply after direct European trade routes to Asia were established in the seventeenth century, and their existence as mere commodities became common knowledge.
21. From London, British Library Harley MS 4016 (Austin, 101).
22. One known owner of the sole manuscript witness to *Havelok*, Oxford Bodleian Library MS Laud Misc. 108, was Henry Perveys, son of a London alderman who

- was also an important member of the fishmongers guild in the early fifteenth century (*Havelok*, ed. G. V. Smithers [Oxford: Clarendon, 1987], xiii–xiv).
23. Examining Julian's writings in terms of its materiality is a largely unexplored, though much needed, field of inquiry.
 24. Julian of Norwich, *A Book of Showings to the Anchoress Julian of Norwich*, ed. Edmund Colledge and James Walsh (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediæval Studies, 1978), 312–13.
 25. In *The Poems of the Pearl Manuscript: Pearl, Cleanness, Patience, and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, ed. Malcolm Andrew and Ronald Waldron (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2002).
 26. Barbara Ketcham Wheaton, *Savoring the Past* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983), 12.
 27. Massimo Montanari, *Medieval Tastes: Food, Cooking, and the Table* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 178.
 28. For chromatic food, see Melitta Weiss Adamson, *Food in Medieval Times* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2004), 68–9.
 29. The culture of entremets is examined in Christina Normore, *Feast for the Eyes: Art, Performance, and the Late Medieval Banquet* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2015), esp. chapter 1.
 30. As suggested by Sharon Wells, "Manners Maketh Man: Living, Dining, and Becoming a Man in the Later Middle Ages," in Nicola F. McDonald and W. M. Ormrod (eds.), *Rites of Passage: Cultures of Transition in the Fourteenth Century* (Rochester, NY: Boydell: 2004) 77; and also in my *Political Appetites*, 17–18.
 31. Richard Warner, *Antiquitates culinariae; or curious tracts relating to the culinary affairs of the old English* (London: R. Blamire, 1791), 93–4. Eighteenth Century Collections Online.
 32. One item that surely went to the petitioners was the trenchers used during the meal. These were squared slices of hardening bread that would catch the meat juices and sauces and would otherwise have to be thrown away.
 33. A convenient edition of *Sir Gowther* can be found in *The Middle English Breton Lays*, ed. Anne Laskaya and Eve Salisbury (Kalamazoo, MI: TEAMS series, Medieval Institute Publications, 1995).
 34. I discuss this passage in the context of the apostolic approach to Mermedonian cannibalism in *Political Appetites*, 40–1.
 35. There is a pun here on *poena* (penalty) at the root of "penitence" and *panis* (bread).

2

JOE MOSHENSKA

The Art of Early Modern Cookery

(and yet: what if knowledge itself were *delicious*?)

- Roland Barthes[†]

Delicious Conceits

What do the following two things have in common: a set of imitation platters, dishes, and cups, ingeniously crafted out of spiced sugar paste and set alongside an almond tart “stamped with sugre [sugar] and Rose-water”; and the rhetorical figure of synecdoche, in which a part of something stands in for the whole – as when ships are called sails? To the modern eye, not very much, but in early modern England the very same word could describe them both – *conceit*. The former example comes from John Partridge’s volume *The treasurie of commodious conceits, and hidden secrete*s, in which Chapter 7 is titled “Suger paste to make conceites for banquets.”² The second comes from George Puttenham’s *The Arte of English Poesy*, perhaps the most lengthy and significant compendium of poetic and rhetorical techniques from this period, in which he called synecdoche “the figure of quick conceit,” because with it the poet manages to cram “large meaning” into a small space, such that it could be “speedily discovered by every quick wit.”³ Distant from one another though the deftly sculpted sugar and the cleverly crafted phrase might seem today, they share an emphasis on ingenuity, and virtuosity; furthermore, as Puttenham’s emphasis on the shared speediness of writer and reader suggests, they are both quick-witted creations that demand or expect a responsive quick-wittedness from those who devour them. While the word “conceit” was used as early as the late fourteenth century writings of Chaucer and Gower to mean anything conceived in the mind, the *Oxford English Dictionary* suggests that the meanings operative here – “A fanciful, ingenious, or witty expression, metaphor, turn of thought” and “A fancy item of food; a dainty, a confection” – both emerged in the sixteenth century.⁴ The fact that this word assumed this range of meanings at least suggests that, in the early modern period, being witty or artful with food and

with words were understood to have something deeply to do with one another.

This chapter will argue that the range of meanings potentially contained within the early modern use of the word “conceit” illuminates a broader feature of early modern literature: A wide range of writers in this period shared an awareness that cooking and eating were closely bound up and aligned with the writing and reading of literature. This awareness took many different forms, and provoked responses ranging from an anxious desire to distinguish the two sets of practices, and a delighted willingness to identify them entirely. While this is doubtless true in a sense of many periods, the forms that this anxiety and delight took in the early modern period were inflected by a range of interrelated developments and debates specific to the time. Foremost among these were: religious debates focusing on the eating of the Eucharist and what it signified; an increase in geographical mobility and the acceleration of colonial expansion, which brought Europeans into contact with challenging new ways of thinking about language and food, and led to an influx of new ingredients; debates surrounding the status of manual labour, including cookery, and its practice by members of the lower social classes, especially women; changing social norms surrounding table manners and behavior while eating; new or revived understandings of the body and its processes of digestion and nourishment, in which chemical and alchemical theories increasingly competed with Galenic accounts. Even this brief and incomplete survey suggests that food and eating were intertwined with most of the truly important and disputed areas of early modern culture. As a result, it is no surprise to find food assuming a position of prominence in some of the most noteworthy writers and texts of the period. It would be possible to write whole books on the significance of food and eating in the writing of Erasmus, or Rabelais, or Cervantes, or Shakespeare, or Jonson, or Milton, and indeed some scholars have done just that.⁵

Rather than trying to offer an overview of the significance of food in this rich period, this chapter will focus on the question that is, I suggested, posed by the meanings of the word “conceit” – what do the making of food and of poetry have to do with one another?⁶ It will be divided into two sections: in the first, I will suggest some underlying reasons for which food has become a topic of particular interest to scholars of the early modern period in recent years, and sketch some of the principle connections between the culinary and the literary. In the second section, I will turn to a brief case-study of two figures from the seventeenth century who illuminate the complex connections between the early modern arts of food and poetry: Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, who both drew upon and distanced herself from the conventional pursuits of the housewife, including cookery;

and John Milton, who made the dangerous allure and viable pleasure of food absolutely central to his imagination and sense of self across his poetic career, but especially in *Paradise Lost*.

“Fed with the Same Food”: Eating as Distinction and Indistinction

“Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions – fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons . . . as a Christian is?” This is the Jewish merchant Shylock’s most famous speech in Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice*, and his well-known rhetorical questions – “If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh?” – tend to obscure the basic claims that come immediately before.⁷ Jews and Christians are part of the same common humanity because they are “fed with the same food,” unified in their basic bodily need for sustenance. What could be simpler than this claim that food is one of the few things that unites us all? To an audience member, however, these words can sound jarring in their context, for when Shylock first arrived in the play he struck almost exactly the opposite tone. Invited by Bassanio to sup – “If it please you to dine with us” – he responded “Yes, to smell pork . . . I will buy with you, sell with you, talk with you, walk with you, and so following, but I will not eat with you, drink with you, nor pray with you” (1.3.32, 34–6).⁸ Shylock invokes their respective diets as one of the untraversable divides that separates him from the Christians in the play; they are absolutely the same in that they both must eat, but absolutely other in what and how they eat.

According to Shylock eating is something that unites and divides, both blurs the boundaries that separate him from other humans and accentuates his individuality. This seems instinctively right: My hunger is shared, but my tastes and proclivities are my own. This simultaneity of inclusion and exclusion is integral to food in general, and early modern food in particular. As the anthropologist Mary Douglas once observed: “If food is treated as a code, the messages it encodes will be found in the pattern of social relations being expressed. The message is about different degrees of hierarchy, inclusion and exclusion, boundaries and transactions across the boundaries.”⁹ This helps to clarify Shylock’s seemingly contradictory utterances, or show them as symptomatic rather than anomalous: Food is *always* a matter of exclusion and inclusion at once, and talking about it always tends both to erect boundaries and to traverse them. One of the exciting features of early modern food in particular, as the remainder of this section will argue, is that considering its place in literature can push us to complicate many of the distinctions through which we tend to divide the world, and human activity

within it: If we can no longer distinguish the individual and her body neatly from the world that she inhabits, neither can we maintain a separation between the culinary and literary arts, between head-work and hand-work, or between knowing something, making something, and eating something.

The principal distinction that an attention to early modern food and literature has the potential to complicate, as I have already suggested, is that between the categories of food and literature themselves – more specifically, between the making and consumption of literature, and that of poetry. The comparison of reading to eating and digesting – in which salutary or edifying works are incorporated, and become part of the individual's substance, while dangerous or disgusting works are to be spat or vomited out – was an ancient one that found its way, especially via the 84th of Seneca's *Epistulae*, into many humanist accounts of proper reading practices. As the work of Michael Schoenfeldt, David Hillman, and Katharine Craik has shown, this background changes how we read the frequent moments of attention to the processes of digestion found in literary texts from this period – they become particularly intense moments of authorial self-reflection, and writers who depicted the successes or failures of digestion were usually also depicting acute hopes and anxieties regarding the way in which their own texts would be received.¹⁰ In Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, for example, his depiction of the ideally temperate body in the form of a castle includes a description of the stomach as a chamber in which “About the Cauldron many Cookes accoyld,/With hookes and ladles, as need did require,” and “The kitchin Clerke, that hight Digestion” organizes a team of workers who separate the “scum” from the nutritious parts.¹¹ Here, in keeping with standard medical accounts of digestion, it becomes a second, internal cooking that recapitulates and completes the preparation of the food before it is eaten. This presentation of the human body becomes a way of understanding the otherwise opaque processes of digestion, in which fleshy organs are capable of distinguishing between the nutritious and the superfluous: The discriminating ability of the belly suddenly seems akin to the partitioning power of Spenser's own allegorical mode, based on the clear distinction between figures and features. In the very first episode of Spenser's poem, however, he depicts the serpentine monster Error, who showers the Knight of Holiness with her vomit – “A floud of poyson horrible and blacke” that “full of booke and papers was” (1.1.20). In this way Spenser encapsulates early modern fantasies and nightmares of how a text might be consumed.

If early modern writers agreed that temperate digestion was preferable to distempered vomiting, however, the extent to which they were willing to suggest the concomitant implication – that the art of the poet was akin to the

art of the cook – was much more varied. In his *Gorgias*, widely read in the early modern period, Plato had Socrates explicitly deny that cooking could be a true art (*techne*), calling it a mere “routine . . . that produces gratification and pleasure,” and aligning it with the empty rhetoric of the sophist.¹² Cooking seemed doubly suspect to Plato – as productive of empty and distracting pleasure, and as a form of mindless handiwork, mere artisanal practice opposed to the true endeavors of philosophy. These were closely connected to the reasons for which Plato proposed to ban poetry from his ideal republic, and in the early modern period cookery and poetry continued to attract similar and parallel forms of disparagement. Some accounts of poetry acknowledged more literal points of overlap with the creations of the kitchen. Elsewhere in his *Arte of English Poesy*, Puttenham wrote “Of short epigrams called posies” that they “were sent usually for New Year’s gifts or to be printed or put upon their banqueting dishes of sugarplate or of marchpane, and such other dainty meats.”¹³ Culinary and literary conceits might not just be alike but one and the same – some poetry was made to be eaten. Even when the link was less literal, however, many writers were concerned both playfully to align their practices with those of the kitchen and to maintain distinctions from such activities as were associated with the domestic realm, with women, and with members of lower social classes. Ben Jonson, obsessed throughout his writings with both ends of the digestive tract, began his 1623–4 court masque *Neptune’s Triumph for the Return of Albion* with a dialogue between a poet and a master cook:¹⁴

COOK: Were you ever a cook?

POET: A cook? No, surely.

COOK: Then you can be no good poet, for a good poet differs nothing at all from a master cook. Either’s art is the wisdom of the mind.¹⁵

The cook goes on to deliver a voluminous speech in which he presents his vocation as a storehouse of all the arts – “He designs, he draws,/He paints, he carves, he builds he fortifies.” In constructing intricate dishes for various palates the cook is a master of military fortification, astrology, and “has Nature in a pot, ’bove all the chemists” (ll.57–8, 70). These lines in context are seriocomic – as part of a Jacobean court masque, an artform that took place in close proximity to lavish banquets, Jonson’s art was quite literally juxtaposed with that of King James’s master cooks – but, just as Spenser used digestion to express his hopes and fears as a poet, these lines should be read as part of Jonson’s career-long wrestling with the worth and status of his works, and their awkward proximity to lower pseudo-arts that he disdained.¹⁶ Likewise, in *Volpone*, the eponymous protagonist’s ability to gull and deceive all around him is clearly a version of Jonson’s own powers as

a playwright: when Volpone describes himself as “Letting the cherry knock against their lips,/And draw it by their mouths, and back again” (1.1.89–90), it suggests that Jonson conceived of these powers in both teasingly erotic and culinary terms, his hold over his audience maintained by keeping them poised on the verge of eating.¹⁷

Early modern English writers, then, repeatedly compared their own practice to the art of cookery, and the reception of their works to the consumption and digestion of food – but this comparison could be reassuring and unsettling at different moments, a way of both acknowledging and fending off the disparagement to which poets were vulnerable in this period. Before moving on to my case studies from the seventeenth century, I would like to end by suggesting a further, general reason for the frequent conjunction of literature and food in this period, and one that makes it fertile territory for future scholarship. As the examples that I have surveyed suggest, food could be a straightforward and everyday matter in the early modern period – a way of fulfilling the body’s basic needs, and, as Shylock observed, something common to all humanity. But it could also be a charged with heightened significance, a way of displaying the ingenuity of its creator. Each side of this divide, however, was split into its own positive and negative forms: Literature could seem just as fundamental as food, or just as lowly and unremarkable; it could seem just dazzlingly virtuosic, or just as trivial, ornamental, and insubstantial. That these contrasting valuations were all present and tenacious in the early modern period is no small part of what makes food both ubiquitous in literature from this time, and so unstable in its importance. Beyond the links between the making and consuming of food and of literature, I would suggest that it is this deep and fluctuating uncertainty as to whether a given object – a text or an edible dish – is a matter of the least or of the utmost importance that illuminates their conjunction in the early modern period.

The place where this problem came to the fore is, of course, in debates surrounding the consecrated bread of the Eucharist: this particular edible fragment was held by Roman Catholics and some Lutheran Protestants to stand apart from all others, to conceal the highest theological mystery behind its edible exterior; those Protestants who saw communion as a mere reminder of Christ’s sacrifice, not its recapitulation, insisted that ordinary bread should be used, an insistence that this act was not different in kind from other acts of eating. Everything depended on how this particular bite of food was understood.¹⁸ Eucharistic resonances permeated early modern thought, and any collective meal or tasty morsel could take on sacramental overtones – certainly for Jonson, who spent more than a decade as a Roman Catholic convert, and in whose poems invitations to feast hover between sacred and

profane (as with the eponymous figure in “Inviting a Friend to Supper,” to whom Jonson promises “we’ll speak our minds, amidst our meat” – the commonality of words and food flowing together).¹⁹ The Eucharist was thus only an extreme case of the interpretative quandary that confronts us whenever we encounter a foodstuff, or an act of eating, in an early modern text: does it mean nothing, or everything? To what degree of scrutiny should we subject it?

The way in which food and transformation might be closely linked in English writing of this period, in a manner that both drew upon and spilled beyond Eucharistic discourse, is encapsulated in the final scene of Shakespeare’s *The Winter’s Tale*, where Leontes, astounded by his wife Hermione’s apparent resurrection and feeling her warm body, cries: “If this be magic, let it be an art/Lawful as eating” (5.3.110–11).²⁰ This final invocation of food in the context of wonder and surprise is, however, somewhat anticipated by more seemingly mundane references earlier in the play, as when the Clown reads aloud the shopping list that Perdita has given him: “Three pound of sugar, five pound of currants, rice – what will that sister of mine do with rice?” (4.3.37–9). What, we might ask in turn, are we to do with these listed ingredients? Today they are everyday and readily available items, but to early modern ears they might have been more complex: Sugar was both prized and suspect, hovering in its categorization between a foodstuff, a medicine, and a spice, and its increasing availability was the direct outcome of the colonial expansion and the trade in slaves that were crucial to its production.²¹ Currants and rice, too, were imported and expensive luxury items in this period with complex mercantile significance.²² Viewed from the perspective of their geopolitical histories, this list of ingredients in fact “melds Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Hindu and Hellenistic traditions in a homely dish,” as Julia Lupton observes.²³ This is a useful reminder that the stereotypical English cuisine of beef and boiled vegetables, and its accompanying sense of nationalistic simplicity, only emerged in the eighteenth century – in the early modern period, the kitchen was a place for global mixing and commingling.

My own interest in early modern food has led me to populate a mental shopping list of my own rather like the Clown’s, consisting of foodstuffs with idiosyncratic and now largely forgotten transcultural histories and meanings. The melon, for example, which was increasingly imported to England from North Africa and elsewhere: Why, when Andrew Marvell creates his solitary paradise in “The Garden,” did he imagine himself “Stumbling on melons,” of all the fruits that he could have chosen?²⁴ Since I got interested in this line I have found myself stumbling on melons in my reading: Michel de Montaigne considered the eating of melons one of the four great pleasures

of life, along with fresh air, wine, and one's wife; when the young René Descartes dreamed of a mysterious man who wanted to give him a gift, he "imagined that it was a melon that someone had brought from some foreign land," and later decided that the fruit signified "the charms of solitude."²⁵ Whenever we encounter a foodstuff in reading an early modern text and begin to unpack its history and its resonances, we discover rich new possibilities that lurk within everyday comestibles that we have come to take for granted – but we can rarely know whether these connections would have struck an early modern reader, and whether we should allow, say, the melon to retain its ordinariness. In this sense, unfurling the significance of the foods that it contains replicates in miniature the pleasures and the risks of interpreting early modern literature itself.

"Possets, Pyes, Puddings, and the Like": Knowing and Eating in Cavendish and Milton

Let me now turn to two English writers in the seventeenth century who availed themselves of many of the tropes connected with food and literature that I have been discussing, and developed them in simultaneously illuminating and idiosyncratic ways. Indeed, idiosyncrasy has been a quality long associated with my first example, Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, who has been a victim of the success with which she fashioned her public persona as unique and unprecedented: "though I cannot endeavour to be Henry the Fifth, or Charles the Second," she wrote, "yet I endeavour to be *Margaret the First*."²⁶ This claim to individuality involved carefully distancing herself from two groups with whom she had potential affinities: women engaged in domestic pursuits, and the experimental natural philosophers associated after its formation with the Royal Society. The way in which she deployed food and cooking in her writings was part of her precarious attempts to formulate her own philosophical system and authorial persona in contradistinction to these two groups.

Recent scholarship has decisively altered the way in which we read the culture of recipes – or "receipts," as they were then called – in the early modern period; these included culinary preparations, but also preparations for medicines, cosmetics, and various other forms.²⁷ As numerous scholars have shown, recipe culture by no means existed in a cloistered domestic realm, but provided a space within which women could pursue new forms of social and political activity, and develop novel and creative forms of textual practice: in this sense, recipe culture should very much be considered part of the early modern culture of literature and food.²⁸ This body of scholarship has also demonstrated that recipe culture allowed women to undertake specific forms of knowledge-making

practices in the kitchen and beyond, and as such should be considered as an important part of the bundle of developments known as the “Scientific Revolution.” What is notable about Cavendish in this regard is that she too saw these worlds as connected, and largely rejected them both. Her opposition to experimentation is well known: she deemed its techniques to be “deluding Arts” that only distorted “the observations of regular sense.”²⁹ I suggest that we view her attitude to domestic culture as part of this wider intellectual stance. In her *Sociable Letters*, Cavendish explicitly writes that “most commonly when any of our Sex doth Write, they Write some Devotions, or Romances, or Receipts of Medicines, for Cookery or Confectioners.”³⁰ Cavendish clearly means to differentiate her own varied writerly output – poems, plays, utopian fiction, natural philosophical treatises and more – from these “Receipts . . . for Cookery,” but elsewhere in this collection her relationship to the culinary realm is more equivocal. She flaunts her own domestic incompetence, her failure to fulfil the stereotypical role of the “huswife,” in a riotous letter that details her attempts to perform various household duties, “most of which, though I had Will, yet I had no Skill to Work.” Eventually a servant convinces her to stop trying to cook dainty dishes, “for I seldom did Eat Sweet-meats my self, nor made Banquets for Strangers . . . besides, said she, you may keep half a score Servants with the Mony that is laid out in Sugar . . . which go to the Preserving only of a Few Sweet-meats, that are good for nothing, but to Breed Obstructions, and Rot the Teeth.”³¹ Cavendish offhandedly stresses her own abstemiousness, and the nature of the sugar that she wastes, which is both an expensive luxury and dangerous to the teeth and bowels.

In other letters, however, she does reveal quite an extensive knowledge of, and interest in, cookery, as a way of understanding processes of material transformation, which is much more in keeping with broader recipe culture. One letter discusses the nature of milk at length, arguing that it is compounded of “Oyly, Earthy, and Watery” parts, and explains that brown bread is “much Cooler than white”; another discusses the lightness of dust (a topic that resonates with Cavendish’s early poems on Lucretian atomism) but does so by way of an analogy with the behavior of “Cake and Pye-crust, Cream and Butter.” Revealingly, however, at the end of this letter Cavendish pulls suddenly back from her apparent expertise, claiming that “having had no Practice, I cannot have much Skill in these Meats, and ‘tis Probable my Cook can give better Reasons than I can.”³² Cavendish is, I would suggest, implicitly siding with the many critics of experimental philosophy who ridiculed its reliance upon artisanal knowledge and sooty, mucky, manual practice; her aristocratic status, which distances her from the work properly pursued by servants and cooks, dovetails seamlessly with her philosophical stance. Shying away from cooking meant shying away from experimentation.

And yet, in the *Observations upon Experimental Philosophy*, her principal polemic against the New Science, Cavendish returns to cooking yet again, claiming that the “artificial things” created by experimenters are opposed to Nature’s “wise and fundamental actions”:

Nature, being a wise and provident Lady . . . hates to be idle, which makes her employ her time as a good Huswife doth, in Brewing, Baking, Churning, Spinning, Sowing, &c . . . But if any one would take delight in such things, my opinion is, that our female sex would be the fittest for it, for they most commonly take pleasure in making of Sweet-meats, Possets, several sorts of Pyes, Puddings, and the like; not so much for their own eating, as to employ their idle time; and it may be, they would prove good Experimental Philosophers, and inform the world how to make artificial Snow by their Creams or Possets beaten into froth, and Ice by their clear, candied or crusted quiddinies or conserves of fruits; and Frost by their candied herbs and flowers; and Hail by their small comfits made of water and sugar with whites of Eggs; and many other the like figures which resemble Beasts, Birds, Vegetables, Minerals, &c.³³

This remarkable passage reminds us of a basic but crucial fact – that, however useful or meaningful we might seek to make it, food is also a matter of, to use her term, sheer *delight*: the culinary suits Cavendish for her account of nature because it is a realm in which knowledge and pleasure intertwine and fuse, as my epigraph from Barthes suggests. In making this claim, Cavendish opposes rather than implicitly aligning and condemning the labor of the aristocratic woman and the male experimenter: she returns to the claim, made by Ben Jonson’s master cook, that the creations of culinary expertise are authentically virtuosic, but goes further, genuinely seeing them as better capable than experiments of replicating and thereby revealing the works of nature. For all her ambivalence about cookery as a model for her authorial practice, in this passage Cavendish asserts that to cook is to know the world as it truly is.

The nature of cooking and eating was even more emphatically tied up with the processes of knowing and understanding the world and oneself for my final example, John Milton. As numerous scholars have shown, Milton was deeply preoccupied throughout his writings with the temptation to indulge in food. This risk became important to Milton in painfully literal ways, at least as he understood it – he believed the condition to which he attributed his blindness, *gutta serena*, to be the result of the body’s failure fully to evacuate the humors produced in digestion, and therefore as a symptom of eating gone wrong.³⁴ There are certainly many reflections to be found in *Paradise Lost* of these fears of indigestion and over-indulgence, largely displaced onto the flatulent demonic artillery created during the War in Heaven, “whose roar/

Emboweled with outrageous noise the air,” and culminating in the pyrrhic triumph of Satan’s return to Hell in Book 10, when he and the other devils are reduced to gnashing and spluttering compulsively on the ashy apples: “With hatefulest disrelish writhed their jaws/With soot and cinders filled.”³⁵ Reading and eating are not just figuratively aligned in these lines: reading them aloud, we experience that ways in which both food and words have the capacity to fill our mouths, as we chew momentarily with the devils on the thickly rolling sounds of “disrelish writhed.”

Just as Spenser balanced indigestion and emesis with temperate digestion, however, these devilish counter-examples frame and punctuate the much richer, though still highly ambiguous, scenes of consumption in Heaven and in Paradise. These are so prominent in Milton’s poem that, as Schoenfeldt puts it, “his Garden of Eden is in many ways a Garden of Eating.”³⁶ I cannot explore in detail here the many significances that Milton gives to food, but will instead suggest in closing that it is of interest to him precisely because eating encapsulates and illuminates one of the cruxes of *Paradise Lost*. The central and magnificently generative tension in Milton’s imagination, as I understand it, is between his urge to assert his own – and, by extension, humanity’s – uniqueness and distinctiveness, and a countervailing urge to stress commonality, interconnectedness, and the mutual implication of every aspect of the divinely created world. Another way to put this would be to say that *Paradise Lost* contains and magnifies Shylock’s opposed claims for food – that it unites, but also divides and differentiates. When Eve creates her raw and vegetarian banquet for Adam and the Angel – “fruit of all kindes, in coate,/Rough, or smooth rin’d, or bearded husk, or shell/She gathers . . . and from sweet kernels prest/She tempers dulcet creams” (5.431–3, 346–7) – the narrator strikingly insists that Raphael eats not “in mist, the common gloss/Of Theologians, but with keen dispatch/Of real hunger, and concoctive heate/To transubstantiate” (5.435–8). Adam’s questioning of Raphael prompts the Angel’s explanation of the hierarchical and yet fluid nature of creation, and his suggestion that “from these corporal nutriments perhaps/Your bodies may at last turn all to Spirit” (5.496–7). There is a momentary ambiguity here – the dominant sense is clearly that Adam and Eve will turn *away from* their “corporal nutriments,” but there is a fleeting suggestion that it is *by means of* these nutriments that they might begin their ascent up the spiritual ladder.

And yet: as with every aspect of *Paradise Lost*, the precise status of these lines is cast into doubt by the problem of representing prelapsarian modes of being (and eating) in postlapsarian language. If Edenic eating has been decisively and irredeemably lost, how are we to respond to the Angel’s use of the terms “concoctive heate” and “transubstantiate”? Are they to be

understood in an originary sense, before they were contaminated by alchemical and Eucharistic discourse? Or do they instead stand as conspicuous reminders that we can only understand these ideal and unified process of eating and digestion in our own fallen terms? It is not just that eating both connects and potentially divides spheres of Creation in *Paradise Lost* – Hell, Eden, Heaven – but that it stands as the starker reminder of the divide that we cannot either cross nor stop trying to imagine crossing: that created by the Fall itself. In this way Milton makes stunning use of food in order to ensure our implication in the world of the poem – the feeling of its potential accessibility – and its simultaneous and terrible distance from the world of the reader.

Taste and Temptation

Much has been written of the rise of a discourse of aesthetic taste in the eighteenth century, a process in which the rise of Milton's reputation as the poet of unmatched sublimity played no small part.³⁷ Leonard Barkan observes of this process: "That we should call *all* artistic sensibility by the name 'taste' speaks to a wish that our affinities, our intellectual and emotional responsiveness, our personal categories of esthetic pleasure might be as intimate and absolute within our bodies as food and drink."³⁸ I have suggested that this "wish," as Barkan calls it, is one that early modern writers themselves did frequently express; but they could do so only with considerable ambivalence, all too aware of the contrasting possibility that their works might be akin to food not in their intimate pleasures but in their ornamental triviality, or their nauseating excess.

Milton depicted this ideal unity of culinary and aesthetic pleasure rooted in the body most resoundingly – but only while placing it on the other side of an absolute divide, before the Fall. He acknowledged the twinned delights of food and literature, but also recognized their parallel dangers. If, as I began by noting, the word "conceit" could refer both to pieces of verbal and culinary virtuosity in the early modern period, it is notable that the word appears just once in *Paradise Lost*, when Satan as toad breaths into Eve's ear the dream of "Vain hopes, vain aims, inordinate desires/ Blown up with high conceits engendering pride" (4.808–9). The dream fails to tempt her outright, though its impact is arguably felt in her desire for solitude when she awakes: The "high conceits" of the dream pave the way for a dangerously delicious conceit of a different sort, the "fruit of fairest colours mixed,/Ruddy and gold" (9.577–8) that she will soon pluck and eat.

Notes

1. Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill & Wang, 1975), 23; emphasis in the original.
2. John Partridge, *The treasurie of commodious conceits, & hidden secrets and may be called, the huswivues closet, of healthfull prouision* (London, 1591).
3. George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesy: A Critical Edition*, ed. Frank Whigham and Wayne A. Rebhorn (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007), 270, 315–16.
4. OED, “Conceit,” senses 9b, 10b. See the excellent discussion of culinary and literary conceits by Wendy Wall, *Recipes for Thought: Knowledge and Taste in the Early Modern English Kitchen* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), ch.2.
5. For examples of book-length studies of food and eating in particular early modern authors. See Bruce Thomas Boehrer, *The Fury of Men’s Gullets: Ben Jonson and the Digestive Canal* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997); Joan Fitzpatrick, *Food in Shakespeare: Early Modern Dietetics and the Plays* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007).
6. Though I will discuss forms of writing beyond poetry, I deliberately pose this in poetic terms, in order to examine the possibilities tantalizingly raised by Kyla Tompkins in her study of the recipe as a form: “if a poem can look like many things, what if we read the recipe’s literary context as poetry rather than narrative . . . ? What if its temporality is interruptive rather than continuous?” (“Consider the Recipe,” *J19: The Journal of Nineteenth-Century Americanists* 1.2 [2013], 439–45; 444.n.4).
7. William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, 3.1.54–60, in *Complete Works*, ed. Richard Proudfoot, et al (Arden, 1998). Subsequent references to Shakespeare’s works are to this edition and appear parenthetically.
8. See the excellent discussion by David B. Goldstein, *Eating and Ethics in Shakespeare’s England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), ch. 2, esp. 74–6.
9. Mary Douglas, “Deciphering a Meal,” *Daedalus* 101.1 (1972), 61–81; 61.
10. Michael Schoenfeldt, *Bodies and Selves in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), esp. 25–8, 58–60, 132–46; David Hillman, *Shakespeare’s Entrails: Belief, Skepticism and the Interior of the Body* (New York: Macmillan, 2007), esp. 69–75, 95–8; Katharine Craik, *Reading Sensations in Early Modern England* (New York: Macmillan, 2007), ch. 5: “Eating His Words: Thomas Coryat and the Art of Indigestion.”
11. Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, ed. A. C. Hamilton. 2nd ed. (London: Longman, 2001), Book II, Canto 9, Stanzas 30–31; subsequent references are to this edition.
12. Plato, *Gorgias*, in *The Collected Dialogues*, ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1961), 245.
13. Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesy*, ed. Whigham & Rebhorn, 146. “Marchpane” is marzipan.
14. For these wider strands in Jonson’s work see Boehrer, *The Fury of Men’s Gullets*.
15. Ben Jonson, *Neptune’s Triumph for the Return of Albion*, ed. Martin Butler, ll. 22–5, in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*, ed.

- David Bevington, Martin Butler, and Ian Donaldson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), vol. 5. Subsequent references to Jonson are to this edition.
16. For this masque, and masques generally, in relation to the staging of early banquets, see Patricia Fumerton, *Cultural Aesthetics: Renaissance Literature and the Practice of Social Ornament* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1991), chs. 4–5. The masque in question was not performed and Jonson adapted and repurposed these lines for his 1626 play *The Staple of News*: see Wall, *Recipes for Thought*, 77–9.
 17. For this as a moment that “sums up Jonson’s own dramatic technique” see Sean McEvoy, *Ben Jonson, Renaissance Dramatist* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), 57–8.
 18. There is a vast bibliography on Eucharistic debates in this period: for its literary implications see Sophie Read, *Eucharist and the Poetic Imagination in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), esp. 129–32 on the problem of conceiving Christ as food. For a wide-ranging exploration of the symbolism of bread see Piero Camporesi, *Bread of Dreams: Food and Fantasy in Early Modern Europe*, trans. David Gentilcore (Cambridge: Polity, 1989).
 19. Jonson, “Inviting a Friend to Supper,” l.23. For the dispersal of Eucharistic thought see Regina M. Schwartz, *Sacramental Poetics at the Dawn of Secularism: When God Left the World* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008).
 20. On the Catholic and Eucharistic resonances of this moment see Julia Reinhard Lupton, *Afterlives of the Saints: Hagiography, Typology and Renaissance Literature* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996), 175–220.
 21. On the complexities of sugar as spice and medicine see Sidney W. Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (London: Penguin, 1985); Ken Albala, *Eating Right in the Renaissance* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002). On the colonial background see Kim F. Hall, “Culinary Spaces, Colonial Spaces: The Gendering of Sugar in the Seventeenth Century,” in *Feminist Readings of Early Modern Culture: Emerging Subjects*, ed. Valerie Traub, M. Lindsay Kaplan, and Dympna Callaghan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 168–90.
 22. I discuss the political and economic disputes occasioned by the craze for currants in seventeenth century England in *A Stain in the Blood: The Remarkable Voyage of Sir Kenelm Digby* (London: William Heinemann, 2016), 229–34.
 23. Julia Reinhard Lupton, “Room for Dessert: Sugared Shakespeare and the Dramaturgy of Dwelling,” in *Culinary Shakespeare: Staging Food and Drink in Early Modern England*, ed. David Goldstein and Amy L. Tigner (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 2016), 199–224; 220. See also Fitzpatrick, *Food in Shakespeare*, 76–7.
 24. “The Garden,” ll.39–40, in *The Poems of Andrew Marvell*, ed. Nigel Smith (Harlow: Longman, 2007).
 25. *The Complete Essays of Montaigne*, trans. Donald M. Frame (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1943), 846; Alan Gabbey and Robert E. Hall, “The Melon and the Dictionary: Reflections on Descartes’s Dreams,” *Journal of the*

- History of Ideas* 59.4 (1998), 651–68. For another paean to the melon see Robert Appelbaum, *Aguecheek's Beef, Belch's Hiccup and Other Gastronomic Interjections* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 120.
26. Margaret Cavendish, *The Blazing World*, in *Political Writings*, ed. Susan James (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 6.
27. Early modern food was always entangled with medical material, both on the level of culinary and medical receipts being included in the same manuscripts, and because the Galenic discourse of “naturals” and “non-naturals” tended to focus medical attention on what entered and left the body, including food: see Nancy G. Siraisi, *Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine: An Introduction to Knowledge and Practice* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 100–1.
28. See Elizabeth Spiller, “Introductory Note,” in *Seventeenth-Century English Recipe Books: Cooking, Physic and Chirurgery* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008), xi–li; Wall, *Recipes for Thought*; Laura Knoppers, *Politicizing Domesticity from Henrietta Maria to Milton’s Eve* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).
29. Margaret Cavendish, *Observations upon Experimental Philosophy* (London, 1666), 12.
30. CCXI *Sociable Letters written by the Thrice Noble, Illustrious, and Excellent Princess, the Lady Marchioness of Newcastle* (London, 1664), 225–6. I am extremely grateful to Cassandra Gorman for discussion of this text. Cavendish may have had in mind recent cookbooks and collections of receipts by notable women such as Elizabeth Talbot Grey’s *A Choice Manual of Rare and Select Secrets in Physick and Chyrurgery* (1653), Altheia Talbot Howard’s *Natura Exenterata, or Nature Unbowelled* (1655), and especially Queen Henrietta Maria’s *The Queens Closet Opened* (1655): these works can conveniently be read in *Seventeenth-Century English Recipe Books*, ed. Spiller.
31. CCXI *Sociable Letters*, 312–13.
32. CCXI *Sociable Letters*, 322, 334–5.
33. Cavendish, *Observations*, 101–2.
34. See William Kerrigan, *The Sacred Complex: On the Psychogenesis of Paradise Lost* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), 201–4.
35. John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, ed. Alastair Fowler, 2nd edition (London: Longman, 2007), 6.587–8, 10.569–70. Further references appear parenthetically. For a fuller discussion of the latter scene see my *Feeling Pleasures: The Sense of Touch in Renaissance England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 274–5.
36. Schoenfeldt, *Bodies and Selves*, 139. There have been numerous discussions of Edenic eating: I have found Goldstein, *Eating and Ethics*, ch. 5, especially stimulating; see 248.n.18 for a useful bibliography of earlier studies.
37. See Denise Gigante, *Taste: A Literary History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008); Stephen Shapin, “The Sciences of Subjectivity,” *Social Studies of Science* 42.2 (2011), 170–84.
38. Leonard Barkan, “Feasts for the Eyes, Food for Thought,” *Social Research* 66.1 (1999), 225–52; 247–8. I would like to thank David Hillman and Michael Schoenfeldt for generous and acute comments on this chapter.

3

DENISE GIGANTE

The Romantic Revolution in Taste

In the early decades of the nineteenth century, the conservative critics at *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* didn't like anything that smacked of revolution. They criticized William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge in the "Lake School of Poetry" for trying to start a poetic revolution, and they chastised Leigh Hunt and John Keats in the "Cockney School of Poetry" for presuming to publish at all, thereby threatening the world of letters with a class revolution.¹ But there was another aspect to the Romantic revolution in taste, more urban than the Lake School and more upscale than the Cockney School, which caught the critics at their own game: gastronomy, a literary and equally witty critical genre dictating standards of taste, but one that expanded the art of judgment to include food as an object of aesthetic appreciation. On the one hand, the critics at *Blackwood's* took aim at those members of "The Leg of Mutton School of Poetry" who seemed to hold the pleasures of the table above the pleasures of the imagination.² On the other hand, they admired the literary productions of the "Cookery School," such as Ange Denis M'Quin's *Tabella Cibaria; or The Bill of Fare*, a versified menu in Latin with copious English notes on the art of good living.³ John Gibson Lockhart remarked in a review of the book that "the Cookery School and the Cockney School may be said to stand precisely at the two opposite extremes."⁴ One high, the other low, but in a radical revision of the category of art, and a toppling of the philosophical hierarchy of the senses that was in itself revolutionary. The Romantic revolution in taste was if anything, a literal phenomenon, and a gustatory aesthetic.⁵

Romantic gastronomers embraced with gusto what Enlightenment taste philosophers had struggled to comprehend: the analogy inherent in the concept of taste between physical perception (with the tongue and palate) and aesthetic appreciation. Joseph Addison, at the outset of Enlightenment taste discourse, compared the literary critic to a tea connoisseur who could

distinguish nicely between different tea leaves in a blend.⁶ The illustration served to define the man of a refined taste in writing as one who could parse literary beauties as if they were so many tea leaves, distinguishing one from another, recognizing foreign infusions (from other texts or authors), and filtering out defects. This was an empirical model of aesthetic experience, but one that distanced itself from the bodily – and embarrassingly salivary – metaphor that defined it. Two papers after Addison's famous essay on taste, in *Spectator* no. 411, he tied aesthetic experience to the most objective, because cognitively distant, of the senses: “Our Sight is the most perfect and most delightful of all our Senses. It fills the Mind with the largest Variety of Ideas[,] converses with its Objects at the greatest Distance... and may be considered as a more delicate and diffusive kind of Touch, that spreads it self over an infinite Multitude of Bodies, comprehends the largest Figures, and brings into our reach some of the most remote Parts of the Universe.”⁷ Sight was so delicate, so light of touch, that the perceiving subject need not come onto contact with anything; taste, on the other hand, was a form of touch so intense that one merged with the object chemically, taking it into the body, encompassing it, and abolishing all distance between the self and the object.⁸ The metaphor of taste thus worked against the ideal of aesthetic disinterestedness, and the best a philosopher could do, perhaps, was dissolve it into something as insubstantial as tea.

The Romantic revolution in taste, however, turned the metaphor into something more than an analogy, or a way to understand aesthetic experience at the expense of the body. The metaphor was real: the organs of taste were vindicated and themselves had the right to judge. “The gormand [sic] never loses sight of the exquisite organs of taste, so admirably disposed by Providence in the crimson chamber where sit the discriminating judge, the human tongue,” writes a *Blackwood’s* representative from the so-called Cookery School.⁹ Rather than imbuing imaginative pleasure with a kind of sensuality through the metaphor of taste, gastronomy imbued sensuality with imagination. Its practitioners reclaimed the term “gourmand” from its former associations with gluttony, or the epicureanism of the ancients, which reveled in the extravagance of feasting. Taste shifted attention to refinement as the benchmark of connoisseurship and good living, and nouvelle cuisine stressed delicacy. This modern School of Cookery emerged in opposition to the kind of recipes found in *Apicius de re coquinaria*, fountainhead of culinary artistry associated with the Ancient Roman bon-vivant, Apicius. “Three brothers of that name were known in Rome,” our Cookery-School professor explains, “but no otherwise than on account of their unparalleled love of good living, and their sumptuous tables, daily loaded with an extravagant and expensive show of dishes.”¹⁰ The English “epicure,” like his savvy French cousin the

“gourmand,” shook off this now inelegant excess and trumped the disembodied “man of taste” as a connoisseur and arbiter of cultural standards.

The Cockney School, despite *Blackwood's* efforts to position it against the Cookery School, took up the challenge represented by the latter to the cultural status quo. The first of Lockhart's essays “On the Cockney School of Poetry” takes Leigh Hunt's poem *The Story of Rimini* as its object of critical judgment, but Lockhart has the commensality of Hunt's essayistic “Round Table” in mind when he complains: “When he talks about chivalry and King Arthur, he is always thinking of himself,” and “*a small party of friends, who meet once a-week at a Round Table, to discuss the merits of a leg of mutton, and of the subjects upon which we are to write.*”¹¹ While a leg of mutton would seem to have little to do with the higher, noble ideals of chivalry, Hunt and Hazlitt, the two principal writers of “The Round Table,” saw themselves as direct descendants of Addison and the other periodical essayists who had helped to create a taste for English *belles-lettres*, including romance. And even if it escaped the *Blackwood's* critics, the Spectatorial analogy between “Mental Taste” and “that Sensitive Taste, which gives us a Relish of every different Flavour that affects the Palate” was not lost on Hunt or his Round Table.¹² Although “The Leg of Mutton School” – a descendant of the Cockney School in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* – was formulated in a review of John Nathaniel Hollingsworth's *Fleurs, A Poem in Four Books*, its professors included the writers of the Round Table, whose critical as well as creative activities posed a threat to the literary establishment.

William Hazlitt's essay “On Gusto,” first printed in “The Round Table” in 1816, reads as a manifesto, perhaps the manifesto, of the Romantic revolution in taste, for it gives a name to Romanticism's gustatory aesthetics. Hazlitt reaches back, beyond the century of taste, to the continental metaphor of *gusto* or *goût* in order to defamiliarize and thus restore the concept to its full-bodied flavor. Hazlitt's prime example of gusto from the world of English *belles-lettres* (as for Addison) was the poet John Milton.¹³ “Milton has great gusto,” Hazlitt proclaims, “He repeats his blows twice, grapples with and exhausts his subject. His imagination has a double relish of its objects, an inveterate attachment to the things he describes, and to the words describing them.”¹⁴ Milton is no glutton, but he is a gourmand in the Romantic sense of the term, tearing into the very flesh of his subjects and manifesting a kind of connoisseurship compatible with overt enjoyment. Gusto is linked to passion, and Milton manifests an aesthetic attitude that is not transparently disinterested in the manner of the ideal Enlightenment man of taste. Hunt echoes Hazlitt, underscoring the

gastronomical connotation of gusto, when he writes that the English poet “who has written with the greatest gusto on the subject of eating is Milton.”¹⁵ If Milton helped Addison define the principles of English literary taste in *The Spectator*, he likewise provided the Romantic periodical essayists in his wake with a prehistory of that taste, and a model for the more passionate gusto.

The poet John Keats, lumped with Hunt and Hazlitt in *Blackwood's Cockney School*, eagerly devoured Hazlitt's idea of gusto. Much of Keats's poetry, as well as his aesthetic theory, is based on this model of gustatory pleasure, and his very definition of the poet is a creature who “lives in gusto.”¹⁶ In the margins of his copy of *Paradise Lost*, Keats rephrased Hazlitt's description of Milton as a predator: “Milton in every instance pursues his imagination to the utmost – he is ‘sagacious of his Quarry’ he sees Beauty on the wing, pounces upon it and gorges it to the producing his essential verse.”¹⁷ Keats is quoting Milton's description of Death in Book X of *Paradise Lost* when, as a result of Adam and Eve's transgression of taste, Death suddenly has a whole feast spread out before him, in the form of the mortal human race. “He snuff'd the smell / Of mortal change on Earth,” Milton writes, his appetite kindled by the sensations of his olfactory nerves.¹⁸ Death too is a predator, and Milton is punning on the double sense of “sagacious,” which in addition to meaning judicious, or of acute mental discernment, also refers to the sharp sense of smell that can descry a prey at long distance. In Milton's epic analogy, a “ravenous Fowl,” sensing its meal in the warm bodies on a battlefield, is as sagacious as Death.¹⁹ In Miltonic gusto, ravenousness was linked to sagaciousness. Appetite was not incompatible with taste, and for the members of the Cockney School, as for the professors in the Cookery School, it was an asset to be cultivated and prized.

Hazlitt recognized that Milton had a “double relish” of language, and as with “sagacious,” so with “sapience” in the Miltonic vocabulary of taste. After Eve eats the forbidden fruit, Adam addresses she in these terms: “Eve, now I see thou art exact of taste / And elegant, of Sapience no small part, / Since to each meaning savor we apply, / And palate call judicious.”²⁰ The phrase “exact of taste” became the standard by which to judge correctness, the object of Enlightenment taste practice. But Milton applies savor to taste, making “Sapience” double for both the knowingness of the connoisseur and the sense of bodily taste connected to flavor through the Latin *sapor*. The Latin noun itself could mean both the sense of taste and a taste, or flavor. Milton brought the metaphor of taste to life, and it was he to whom the Romantics returned after a century of taste philosophy had drained the life from it. Beauty was meant to be viscerally indulged, not merely tasted, as a wine connoisseur might

do with a sip of wine at a tasting – skim its savor and then spit it out before it can have anything more to do with the body. Hazlitt speaks of Milton’s “double relish,” but Keats makes explicit what Hazlitt left implicit: gusto involves not only grappling with but gorging beauty (or its taste-sensory equivalent, deliciousness). This means not eating gluttonously, or too much, but with the obvious relish of the gourmand.

The most self-consciously gastronomical of the Cockney-School writers, who joined in the commensality of Hunt’s Round Table even if he contributed no essays to the periodical series named after it, was Charles Lamb. Lamb’s signature essayistic persona was Elia, and Elia was a “judicious epicure,” as he styles himself in “A Dissertation Upon Roast Pig.”²¹ “Whatever is,” Elia confesses, “is to me a matter of taste or distaste; or when once it becomes indifferent, it begins to be disrelishing.”²² The statement is from Lamb’s “Imperfect Sympathies,” which initiates the theme, continued in “Grace Before Meat” and elsewhere, of liking or disliking others for their gustatory taste preferences. In a letter on a fish called the John Dory, for example, Lamb assures his friend Charles Chambers: “I esteem you for disrelishing minced veal. Liking is too cold a word. – I love you for your noble attachment to the fat unctuous juices of deer’s flesh & the green unspeakable of turtle.”²³ Social affinities based on shared tastes are, frequently in gastronomical writing, transferred to food when considering the phenomenon of flavors that either do or do not mix well together. In a late essay, “Table-Talk by the Late Elia,” Lamb does just this:

It is a desideratum in works that treat *de re culinariâ*, that we have no *rationale* of sauces, or theory of mixed flavours: as to show why cabbage is reprehensible with roast beef, laudable with bacon; why the haunch of mutton seeks the alliance of currant-jelly, the shoulder civilly declineth it; why loin of veal (a pretty problem), being itself unctuous, seeketh the adventitious lubricity of melted butter, – and why the same part in pork, not more oleaginous, abhorreth from it; why the French bean sympathizes with the flesh of deer; why salt fish points to parsnip, brawn makes a dead-set at mustard; . . . We are as yet but in the empirical stage of cookery. We feed ignorantly, and want to be able to give a reason of the relish that is in us; so that, if Nature should furnish us with a new meat, or be prodigally pleased to restore the phœnix, upon a *given* flavour, we might be able to pronounce instantly, on philosophical principles, what the sauce to it should be, – what the curious adjuncts.²⁴

In his desire to understand the “philosophical principles” of culinary artistry, Lamb was echoing the concern of eighteenth-century taste philosophy with identifying the foundational principles of taste. The irony, of course, is that

gustatory taste is stubbornly individual – instinctual, physiological, chemical – and will not be conscripted into universal standards without compromising its integrity. As Kant puts it, “even if someone lists all the ingredients of a dish, pointing out that I have always found each of them agreeable, and goes on to praise this food – and rightly so – as wholesome, I shall be deaf to all these reasons: I shall try the dish on *my* tongue and palate, and thereby (and not by universal principles) make my judgment.”²⁵ This is the reason for the cliche *de gustibus non est disputandem* (there is no disputing about tastes) to which Kant devotes two sections of the “Critique of Aesthetic Judgment” (§56 and §57), concluding that all the disputation about taste is owing to the fact that it is both subjective *and* objective, neither fully one nor the other. It is also the reason the cavalier *je ne sais quoi* emerged along with the concept of taste, for such preference need not explain itself: “I do not know *how* I know,” the French phrase implies, “and if *you* do not know, there can be no helping you, for you obviously have no taste.” To demand more of oral taste sensation than empirical response, or in Lamb’s words “to give a reason of the relish that is in us,” is to push back at the metaphor, from the opposite direction – or perhaps, to grapple with and exhaust it, as Hazlitt might say, transforming the experience into gusto, as Lamb does throughout his writing. Perhaps he might have profited from Samuel Johnson’s boast that he could write a better cookbook than had yet been written, that is, “a book upon philosophical principles,” had the authoritative man of taste ever turned his pen to that purpose.²⁶

The members of The Lake School, meanwhile, perched on their several peaks in the higher art of poetry, would maintain a qualitative difference between the pleasures of the imagination and those available through the palate. In his 1800 preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth upheld the philosophical hierarchy that positioned poetry at the top of the arts, a category that did not include cookery. According to Kant, who was an important influence on Wordsworth through Coleridge, poetry fortifies the mind by allowing it to feel its capacity, “free, spontaneous, and independent of natural determination,” to soar above and beyond that which it can feel through sensory experience and that which it can understand.²⁷ Poetry “sets the imagination free” and for this reason, among all the arts, it “holds the highest rank.”²⁸ Defending this rank, Wordsworth complains of those “who will converse with us gravely about a taste for poetry, as they express it, as if it were a thing as indifferent as a taste for rope-dancing, or Frontiniac or Sherry.”²⁹ Bracketing dance, which is not our concern here, that which we can physically taste (frontignac or sherry) does not count for Wordsworth, even by means of analogy, as legitimate material for the practice of aesthetic discernment. Lamb thus knows how cheeky he is being when he assures the

Lake Poet, in a marginal note on “A Dissertation Upon Roast Pig” in a copy of the *Essays of Elia* inscribed to Wordsworth, that a ham submersed in sweet pickle for a week and then boiled can produce more pleasure than poetry: “No poem ever stirred the human heart, no slab of tessellated pavement ever fired the archaeologist, with respectful interest akin to that evoked by this entrancing esculent.”³⁰ Lamb was writing with the urbane confidence of an age when the cultural institutions associated with gastronomy – restaurants, tasting juries, food journalism, dining clubs – had irreversibly challenged the disinterested aesthetic on which the traditional hierarchy of the arts was based.

Wordsworth’s critique of contemporary taste in his famous preface was in many ways a “Defence of Poetry” against the incursion of other forms of aesthetic experience, many of them more popular than poetry. Coleridge, like his friend in The Lake School, relied on self-evidentiary logic to suggest the absurdity of holding up incompatible objects – (rope-dancing and poetry), for comparison.³¹ “One man may say I delight in Milton and Shakespeare more than Turtle or Venison,” Coleridge lectures his audience in 1818, “another man that is not my case for myself I think a good dish of turtle and a good bottle of port afterwards give me much more delight than I receive from Milton and Shakespeare you must not dispute about tastes.”³² The *de gustibus non est disputandem*, which Coleridge references, had been a problem for Kant, but Kant could not have foreseen what Coleridge was confronting: a revolution in taste whereby the connoisseurship of turtle soup – or of sherry, venison, frontignac, or port – was beginning to eclipse literary sensibility (as it has fully done today) as an index of taste. Wordsworth and Coleridge may have been suspected of spying for the French, but they were not ready to accept the revolutionary aesthetics that resulted from the French Revolution, as Rebecca Spang has shown, when professionally trained French chefs poured out of the elite second estate into the open market, founding restaurants and initiating a wave of public, discretionary dining that would forever transform high culture.³³

At the same time that Coleridge was lecturing, we find cookbooks outselling the leading literary figures of the day. “Neither Walter Scott nor Lord Byron have had so quick and profitable a sale,” exclaimed one contemporary of the bestselling cookbook *Apicius Redivivus, or the Cook’s Oracle* (1817), by the English gastronomer William Kitchiner.³⁴ Kitchiner, who was not a professional chef, was channeling French gastronomy into a Regency guide to taste. Thomas Moore dubbed him a “*Kitchen Addison*,” and Thomas Hood addressed him as a kitchen-Montaigne: “Oh, very pleasant is thy motley page – / Aye, very pleasant in its chatty vein – / So – in a kitchen – would have talk’d Montaigne.”³⁵ While the original title of Kitchiner’s

cookbook alluded to *Apicius de re coquinaria*, the second edition dropped the allusion to ancient gastronomy so that the book became known as *The Cook's Oracle*. This was more in line with its aims as a treatise on taste, for it invoked *The Oracle; or Manual of the Art of Discretion* by Baltasar Gracián y Morales, a seminal text for aesthetic taste philosophy. Addison, at the start of his *Spectator* essay on taste, remarked that "Gratian very often recommends the *Fine Taste*, as the utmost Perfection of an accomplished Man."³⁶ Kitchiner recognized the degree to which food, whether served up with all the culinary artistry of Parisian haute cuisine or in the more modest form of the Cockney leg of mutton, had become an object of cultural fascination and readerly taste. *Blackwood's* would no doubt have accepted him for admission to The Cookery School, for his gastronomical maxims and reflections were more popular than his recipes.

When Sir Walter Scott heard that an edition of *The Cook's Oracle* was being prepared without the prefaces and introduction, he complained: "Somebody told me there was to be an edition in which all the fun was to be omitted. I hope in that case the Doctor will do as Mr. Hardcastle is asked to do in *She Stoops to Conquer* – 'knock out the brains and serve them up by themselves.'"³⁷ He was referring to the scene in Oliver Goldsmith's play in which two young men, George Hastings and Charles Marlow, mistaking their host Mr. Hardcastle for an innkeeper, criticize his supper menu:

MARLOW. (Reading.) For the first course at the top, a pig, and pruin sauce.
 HASTINGS. Damn your pig, I say.
 MARLOW. And damn your pruin sauce, say I.
 HARDCastle. And yet, gentlemen, to men that are hungry, pig, with pruin sauce, is very good eating.
 MARLOW. At the bottom, a calve's tongue and brains.
 HASTINGS. Let your brains be knock'd out, my good Sir; I don't like them.
 MARLOW. Or you may clap them on a plate by themselves. I do.³⁸

In Scott's analogy, to serve up the beef without the brains would be to be to print the meat of the book, the recipes, without the gastronomical theory guiding them. To clap the brains on a plate by themselves, which Scott advises Kitchiner to do in good turn, would be to produce a work of literary gastronomy.

Kitchiner, at the crux of taste theory and practice, seems to provide the recipe for Lamb's most celebrated essay when he writes: "To gain the praise of Epicurean Pig-Eaters, the CRACKLING must be *nicely crisped* and delicately *lightly browned*, without being either blistered or burnt."³⁹ Following suit, Elia defines crackling as the quintessence of epicurean delight: "There is

no flavour comparable, I will contend, to that of the crisp, tawny, well-watched, not over-roasted, crackling, as it is well called.”⁴⁰ Lamb is aware of himself as a tastemaker, and “A Dissertation Upon Roast Pig” is a rebellious descendant of David Hume’s landmark essay “Of the Standard of Taste,” which originally appeared as a “Dissertation.”⁴¹ To be sure, there may be some Cockney-School defiance in the act of elevating crackling, from the low-brow category where it sits with bacon, to the very canon, or standard of taste. In “Charles Lamb’s ‘pistola porcina’” (as Coleridge dubbed the letter that served as the template for Lamb’s “Dissertation”), Lamb writes of his culinary favorite: “they are interesting creatures at a certain age – what a pity such buds should blow out into the maturity of rank bacon!”⁴² While the “judicious epicure” glories in crackling, sublimed as the essence of the tender suckling roast, even the most uncultivated palate can be gratified by bacon. Indeed, bacon can tempt even a vegetarian, like the poet Percy Shelley, from a cultured, aristocratic taste to gluttony. As Thomas Jefferson Hogg tells the story:

Bacon was proscribed by him; it was gross and abominable. It distressed him greatly at first to see me eat the bacon; but he gradually approached the dish, and, studying the bacon attentively, said, “So this is bacon!” He then ate a small piece. “It is not so bad either!” More was ordered; he devoured it voraciously.

“Bring more bacon!” It was brought, and eaten.

“Let us have another plate.”

“I am very sorry, gentlemen,” said the old woman, “but indeed I have no more in the house.”

The Poet was angry at the disappointment, and rated her.

“What business has a woman to keep an inn, who has not enough bacon in the house for her guests? She ought to be killed!”⁴³

Shelley is at the opposite end of the cultural spectrum from Lamb, and antithetical in his attitude toward taste. He is a vegetarian, and so socially elite that he has no experience of the fried bacon to which (the aptly named) Hogg introduces him. Bacon perverts his delicate sensibility, to the point where he shows signs of impatience, addiction, and, finally, the murderous instinct of a hungry beast. Hogg has given us a snapshot of the very argument Shelley makes against flesh-eating in his notes to *Queen Mab*, reprinted as the pamphlet *A Vindication of Natural Diet*.

Shelley’s vegetarian dietetics was part of the Romantic revolution in taste, stemming from the revolutionary ferment of the 1790s to which he alludes in the title of his *Vindication*.⁴⁴ A concern about rights, not only of men and women but also of “brutes,” raised consciousness about the sufferings animals endured for the sake of human convenience and pleasure. The

Strasbourg goose who was nailed by his webbed feet to the floor in order to yield up a more sumptuous pâté de foie gras, the eels who were skewered live, the pigs who were whipped to death with knotted ropes to tenderize their flesh: such atrocities were barbaric and could not be supported by tasteful society.⁴⁵ Shelley was not alone in the belief that a vegetable regimen could cure not just the body but the morals of society. The English physician William Lambe, who put Keats on a vegetarian regimen, proposed that “strife, violence, and anarchy” could be eradicated from society by the elimination of meat from the human diet: “it seems no visionary or romantic speculation to conjecture that if all mankind confined themselves for their support to the productions supplied by the culture of the earth, war, with its attendant misery and horrors, might cease to be one of the scourges of the human race.”⁴⁶ Such radical dietary politics ran counter to the gastronomical turn in aesthetics.

Mary Shelley captures such politics in *Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus* when she makes Frankenstein’s sympathetic creature a vegetarian. She would have been familiar, too, with her husband’s interpretation of the myth of Prometheus as an allegory of flesh-eating. “Prometheus, (who represents the human race) effected some great change in the condition of his nature, and applied fire to culinary purposes,” Shelley wrote, “thus inventing an expedient for screening from his disgust the horrors of the shambles. From this moment his vitals were devoured by the vulture of disease. It consumed his being in every shape of its loathsome and infinite variety, inducing the soul-quelling sinkings of premature and violent death.”⁴⁷ Shelley argued that human anatomy shows no evidence of the carnivore, and that only the application of fire to animal flesh could pervert man from his natural diet. No fan of the cultural institution of cookery, he manifested a radical, anti-epicurean attitude.

Lord Byron, though for different reasons than Shelley (since Byron, though he may have caused one, intended no revolution in taste), surpassed his friend in the extremity of diet. Shelley frequently forgot to eat, or ate inattentively with his head in a book, but Byron ventured farther in cultivating an indifference toward food. Prone to gaining weight, vain of his creaturely attractions, he actively tried to make whatever he ate as tasteless, nay, as bad-tasting as possible. Edward Trelawny tells us that Byron “would exist on biscuits and soda-water for days together, then, to allay the eternal hunger gnawing at his vitals, he would make up a horrid mess of cold potatoes, rice, fish, or greens, deluged in vinegar, and gobble it up like a famished dog.”⁴⁸ If this behavior shows signs of what we might call an eating disorder, it also bespoke a certain taste philosophy. “Upon my observing he might as well have fresh fish and vegetables, instead of stale,” Trelawny reports, “he

laughed and answered, ‘I have an advantage over you, I have no palate; one thing is as good as another to me.’”⁴⁹ Whether Byron destroyed his palate by an immoderate immersion in vinegar, or whether his indifference toward food was simply part of the performance by George Gordon of the Byronic persona, his boast of having no palate was one that could only have been made, in the European cultural context of the 1820s, by a purposefully retrograde man of taste.

While the critics at *Blackwood’s* may not have put Byron in their “Soda-Water School,” as he was not a target in their assault on the various revolutionaries and transgressors of taste, we may do so here by way of conclusion. John Wilson, who coined the phrase, claims that the founder of the School was the Irish poet Thomas Jennings, who identified himself as a soda-water manufacturer in a letter to the editor of the competing *Edinburgh Magazine* in 1820.⁵⁰ The letter introduces Jennings’ “Dirge on Sir Daniel Donnelly,” and in it the poet from Cork confesses: “Grief drives poetry from my mouth with as vehement an explosion as that which a bottle of soda water in summer expels the cork.”⁵¹ Just as Hunt was implicitly linked to the Leg of Mutton School through his Round-Table hospitality, Byron was linked to The Soda-Water School through the epicurean (in this case, classical Epicurean) attitude of *Don Juan*: “Let us have wine and woman, mirth and laughter, / Sermons and soda-water the day after.”⁵² In a cancelled stanza first printed in 1833 as a headpiece to the poem, Byron even adds alcohol to the post-bacchanalian soda water:

I would to Heaven that I were so much Clay –
 As I am blood – bone – marrow, passion – feeling –
 Because at least the past were passed away –
 And for the future – (but I write this reeling,
 Having got drunk exceedingly to day,
 So that I seem to stand upon the ceiling)
 I say – the future is a serious matter –
 And so – for Godsake – Hock and Soda water.⁵³

In Byron’s “blood – bone – marrow, passion – feeling” we find the very ingredients of Romantic gusto. More than disinterestedness, which would imply the earnest attention of a connoisseur, indifference serves the Byronic persona as a stay, and a thin one at that, against the dangerous, and class-compromised passion associated with gusto – the effervescent enthusiasm that expels poetry from the Soda-Water poet. Whether embraced in the manner of the Romantic gourmand, or violently chased away by vinegar or other means, gusto was the defining feature of aesthetics in the age of gastronomy.

Notes

1. John Wilson, "Essays on the Lake School of Poetry, No. 1," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 3.16 (July 1818), 369–81 (the "Editor" adds Robert Southey to the School in a postscript); and [John Gibson Lockhart], "On the Cockney School of Poetry, No. 1," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 2.7 (Oct. 1817), 38–41.
2. John Wilson, John Gibson Lockhart, or William Maginn, "The Leg of Mutton School of Poetry," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 9 (June 1821), 345–50.
3. John Gibson Lockhart, "Remarks on *Tabella Cibaria or The Bill of Fare*," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 7.42 (September 1820), 667–74.
4. *Ibid.*, 668.
5. See Denise Gigante, *Taste: A Literary History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005).
6. See Joseph Addison, *Spectator* (no. 409), in *The Spectator*, ed. Donald F. Bond, 5 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), 3: 527–8.
7. Addison, *Spectator* (no. 411), 3: 535–6.
8. See Carolyn Korsmeyer, *Making Sense of Taste: Food and Philosophy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999).
9. Ange Denis M'Quin, *Tabella Cibaria; or the Bill of Fare: A Latin Poem, Implicitly Translated and Fully Explained in Copious and Interesting Notes, Relating to the Pleasures of Gastronomy, and the Mysterious Art of Cookery* (London: Sherwood, Neely, and Jones, 1820), 15.
10. M'Quin, *Tabella Cibaria*, 13.
11. Lockhart, "On the Cockney School of Poetry," 39.
12. Addison, *Spectator* (no. 409), 3: 527.
13. Addison devoted twelve papers of *The Spectator* to the beauties of each of the books of *Paradise Lost* (nos. 303, 309, 315, 321, 327, 333, 339, 345, 351, 357, 363, and 369) and one paper to its blemishes (no. 297).
14. *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt*, ed. P. P. Howe, 21 vols. (London: J. M. Dent, 1930), 4: 79–80.
15. *Leigh Hunt's Literary Criticism*, ed. Lawrence Huston Houtchens and Carolyn Washburn Houtchens (New York: Columbia University Press, 1956), 552–8 (556).
16. *The Letters of John Keats*, ed. Hyder Edward Rollins, 2 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958), 1:387.
17. *Keats's Paradise Lost*, ed. Beth Lau (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1998), 142.
18. John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, 10.272–23; *Complete Poems and Major Prose*, ed. Merritt Y. Hughes (New York: Odyssey Press, 1957).
19. Milton, *Paradise Lost*, 10.274.
20. *Ibid.*, 9.1017–20.
21. *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. E. V. Lucas, 6 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903), 2:124.
22. Lamb, *Works*, 2: 58.
23. *The Letters of Charles Lamb to Which Are Added those of his Sister Mary Lamb*, ed. E. V. Lucas, 3 vols. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1935), 2:212.
24. Lamb, *Works*, 1: 406.

25. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1987), 148.
26. James Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson, LL.D.* 3 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1900), 2: 459.
27. Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, 196.
28. Ibid.
29. *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. W. J. B. Owen and Jane Worthington Smyser, 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), 1:139.
30. Quoted in George H. Ellwanger, *The Pleasures of the Table: An Account of Gastronomy from Ancient Days to Present Times* (New York: Doubleday, 1902), 242.
31. See Hume's 1757 essay "Of the Standard of Taste."
32. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Lectures 1818–1819: On the History of Philosophy*, ed. J. R. de J. Jackson, vol. 8 of *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 2: 668–70.
33. See Rebecca Spang, *The Invention of the Restaurant: Paris and Modern Gastronomic Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001).
34. Melesina Chenevix St. George Trench, *The Remains of the Late Mrs. Richard Trench*, ed. her son, 2nd ed. (London: Parker, Son, & Bourn, 1862), 471.
35. Thomas Hood, "Ode to W. Kitchener, M. D.," *The Choice Works of Thomas Hood* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1876), 86, 87.
36. Addison, *Spectator* (no. 409), 3: 527.
37. *The Letters of Sir Walter Scott*, ed. H. J. C. Grierson, vol. 6 vols. (London: Constable, 1934), 6: 80–1.
38. Oliver Goldsmith, *She Stoops to Conquer; or, The Mistakes of a Night* (London: F. Newbery, 1773), 28.
39. William Kitchiner, *The Cook's Oracle; Containing Receipts for Plain Cookery ... Being the Results of Actual Experiments Instituted in the Kitchen of William Kitchiner, M.D. &c.*, rev. ed. (London: Whittaker, Treacher, & Co., 1831), 168.
40. Lamb, *Works*, 2: 123.
41. David Hume, *Four Dissertations* (London: A. Millar, 1757).
42. Coleridge to Thomas Allsop, 18 March 1822, *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Earl Leslie Griggs, vol. 5 of 6 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 222. Lamb, *Letters*, 2: 317.
43. Thomas Jefferson Hogg, *The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley* (London: George Routledge & Sons, 1906), 296–7.
44. See Timothy Morton, *Shelley and the Revolution in Taste: The Body and the Natural World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).
45. See David Perkins, *Romanticism and Animal Rights* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
46. William Lambe, *Water and Vegetable Diet in Consumption, Scrofula, Cancer, Asthma, and Other Chronic Diseases* (New York: Fowlers and Wells, 1850), 126.
47. Percy Bysshe Shelley, *A Vindication of Natural Diet*, new ed. (London: F. Pitman, 1884), 10–11.
48. Edward John Trelawny, *Recollections of the Last Days of Shelley and Byron* (London: Edward Moxon, 1858), 48.

49. Ibid.
50. John Wilson, "An Hour's Tete-a-Tete with the Public," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 8 (Oct. 1820), 93.
51. Thomas Jennings to the Editor, March 26, 1820, *The Edinburgh Magazine* 7 (1820), 199.
52. Lord Byron, *Don Juan* (2.178.7–8), ed. T. G. Steffan, E. Steffan, and W. W. Pratt (London: Penguin, 1973), 146.
53. Byron, *Don Juan*, 591.

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LAUREN F. KLEIN

The Matter of Early American Taste

The story of the first American Thanksgiving, as it is commonly told, involves a tale of Pilgrims and Indians coming together to celebrate a bountiful harvest with a joyous feast. More scrupulous accounts will acknowledge the fundamental contributions of the Wampanoag people, whose local knowledge – the result of 12,000 years of continuous habitation in the area that the Puritan colonists named New Plymouth – enabled the group to gather the five deer, assorted fish and fowl, and plentiful Indian corn that they dined upon that day.¹ But far fewer note the literary and cultural campaign that took place throughout the first half of the nineteenth century that worked to establish this story – its facts and its fictions – as the national origin story for the United States.

Prior to the US Civil War, Thanksgiving was celebrated throughout New England, and had begun to spread to the South and West. But the holiday was not celebrated on the same day in each state, or in way that connected its regional Puritan roots to the ideology of republicanism associated with the nation's founding.² Scholars most often credit author and editor Sarah Josepha Buell Hale (1788–1879) for spearheading the campaign that resulted both in a fixed date for the holiday, and for investing it with cultural and political significance – after all, it was her letter to President Abraham Lincoln, composed at the height of the Civil War, on September 28, 1863, that resulted, five days later, in his declaring the last Thursday of November as a national “day of thanksgiving and praise.”³ But the ideological work that led to Thanksgiving becoming a “truly American festival,” as Hale described it in 1858 editorial in *Godey’s Lady’s Book*, the influential women’s magazine that she edited for forty of its fifty-year run, began much earlier – in the promulgation of a philosophy that linked the sense of taste, as expressed through food and eating, to the expression of republican values and ideals.⁴

Scholars of aesthetics such as Carolyn Korsmeyer and Denise Gigante have demonstrated how, in the eighteenth century, before the word

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“aesthetic” had entered common parlance, philosophers and cultural critics relied upon the metaphor of the sense of taste – the actual, gustatory sense – in order to formulate their ideas about subjective experience and judgment.⁵ To these thinkers, a group constituted primarily of the English cultural critics Anthony Ashley Cooper, the third Earl of Shaftesbury, Joseph Addison, and Richard Steele; and the Scottish philosophers Francis Hutcheson, David Hume, and Henry Home, Lord Kames, the gustatory sense seemed to best represent the way in which aesthetic experiences are first registered by the body, and then processed by the mind. Scholars of the early United States cite these same men in their arguments about the influence of aesthetic philosophy on the nation’s founders. As they explain it, figures such as Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, and James Madison, among others, understood the ability to make tasteful decisions about literature and other forms of culture as indicative of a greater capacity for moral judgment, and consequently, for appropriate political behavior.⁶ The cultivation of good taste thus became crucial to the young republic; if newly enfranchised citizens were to be trusted to make their own political decisions – to “enact[] their freedom in a moral and lawful manner,” as Elizabeth Maddock Dillon has characterized it – they would first need to learn to cultivate their own senses of taste.⁷

Dillon’s scholarship on the subject considers how the sentimental poetry of the mid-nineteenth century helped to consolidate a national sense of taste. Other foundational work in this area has described how, beginning in the late colonial era and extending into the early national period, the participation in individual acts of reading and writing (Michael Warner), as well as the shared experiences that took place in literary salons, coffee houses, and social clubs (David S. Shields), helped to “formalize a practice of good fellowship” and connect it to the “performative values of civic virtue.”⁸ These values included the simplicity associated with Puritan plain living, the temperance that indicated the ability to moderate one’s instinctual desires, and the benevolence that would sustain the social orientation of democratic governance. The sense of taste was central to the cultivation of each of these virtues. It could guide an individual toward the Puritan plain style, in literature and in life; it could be exercised so as to achieve the moderation required of voting citizenry; and it could be refined so as to experience pleasure in participating in acts of civic virtue. By introducing the idea of eating back into this well-hewn explanation of the role of the sense of taste in the early republic, this chapter aims to illuminate the matter of taste itself – that is, how republican taste was expressed not only in literary works or civic functions, but also in the act of eating itself.

Indeed, a host of figures ranging from the nation's first Presidents, to their enslaved cooks, employed acts of eating in order to elaborate – or, alternatively, in order to challenge – the philosophy that linked the expression of good taste to the expression of good citizenship. George Washington, for example, insisted upon modeling temperance and simplicity at his table, once requesting that the “first shad of the season” (a variety of salt-water fish found near his Philadelphia home) that had been cooked for his personal pleasure be taken away untouched. “It shall never be said that my table sets such an example of luxury and extravagance,” he reportedly said. “Luxury and extravagance” were, of course, emblems of the British Crown.⁹ Thomas Jefferson, who left more room at his table for the pleasures of the palate, sought to express “good taste and abundance” through the food that he served to his guests, offering an edible example of the gustatory and material satisfaction that would follow from the moderation of instinctual desires.¹⁰ In doing so, Washington and Jefferson drew directly – and, at times, explicitly – from the aesthetic philosophy that linked the expression of good taste to the expression of civic virtue. Enslavers both, Washington and Jefferson also illustrate the limits of personal taste, in that neither was able to place the satisfaction of their stomachs behind the fulfillment of the nation’s founding ideals.

In my other work, I explore this ideological contradiction in significant detail.¹¹ This chapter considers how the next generation of American novelists – those born in the first years after Independence, and who came of age in the early national era – registered this contradiction, and employed examples of food and eating in their work in attempt to further refine the tastes of their citizen-readers, directing them to seek certain forms of social and political change. Hale, for example, included an extended Thanksgiving tableau in her 1829 novel *Northwood: Life North and South*, using the occasion of a visiting Englishman to explain – in three-page detail – the republican significance of each food item included on the table.¹² But it was Hale’s contemporary, Lydia Maria Child (1802–80), another author and editor, who more fully connected the symbolism of food and eating to the cultivation of personal taste. Child’s own family Thanksgiving tradition, in which “all the humble friends of the Francis household – [the teacher] ‘Ma’am Betty,’ the washer-woman, the wood-sawyer, and the journeymen . . . some twenty or thirty in all – were summoned to a preliminary entertainment,” in which they “partook of an immense chicken pie, pumpkin pies (made in milk-pans), and heaps of donuts,” and “went away loaded with [her father’s] crackers and bread,” struck Thomas Wentworth Higginson, himself a leading arbiter of taste, as “such plain application” of Child’s principled philosophy that he included this anecdote, alongside his account of her

literary and political accomplishments, in his profile of the author that appeared in *Eminent Women of the Age*.¹³

It was not only through her family's Thanksgiving tradition, however, but also through her novels and short stories, that Child illustrates her adherence to a view of good taste as characterized by simple and abundant foods, and as expressed through benevolent acts. In the opening scene of her 1824 novel *Hobomok*, for example, the principal narrator, an Englishman from the Isle of Wright, descends from the ship that had served as his home for the past several months, hoping to find a "second Canaan." Instead, he finds "six miserable hovels" that together "constitute[] the whole settlement of Naumkeak," the Puritan colony that he would soon make his home.¹⁴ Shortly thereafter, the narrator is invited to a breakfast with his colonial compatriots. The meal "consisted only of roasted pumpkin, a plentiful supply of clams, and coarse cakes made of pounded maize," the narrator recalls. "But unpalatable as it proved, even to me, it was cheerfully partaken by the noble inmates of that miserable hut."¹⁵ Here, Child explicitly contrasts the narrator's refined English palate, which prevents him from deriving pleasure from the "plentiful" breakfast, with the delight experienced by the "noble inmates" of Naumkeak. Child, with her characteristic ability to infuse ideological significance into engaging narrative description, stages this scene in order to emphasize how adapting to the environment of New England is fundamentally premised upon a change in personal taste. She also affirms her adherence to the conception of taste as described at the outset of this chapter, as both a specific register of sensory experience and a metaphorical model for one's encounter with the world.

In addition, by specifying the particular components of the meal – pumpkin, clams, and maize – Child, as Hale would do three years later in *Northwood*, deliberately inscribes the regional ingredients of the Northeastern seaboard into national cultural memory. Significantly, that emerging memory was at odds with historical reality: English colonists did not unequivocally embrace indigenous foodstuffs at that time, nor were they readily able to cultivate them.¹⁶ Historical accounts, which Child most likely read, emphasize the widespread aversion to indigenous foods and methods of preparation.¹⁷ Culinary historian Trudy Eden references an account by John Smith, recorded in 1608, of the Jamestown settlers refusing to eat "this savage trash."¹⁸ Even with twenty years and 600 miles separating the establishment of Jamestown from the Naumkeak settlement – Child's novel begins in 1629 – Anglo-American eating habits were far from stable. (One might also cite Mary Rowlandson's 1682 account of her reluctant culinary conversion, which also included a similar description of the "filthy trash" consumed by her Nargansett, Wampanoag, and Nashaway/Nipmuc captors.)¹⁹ By imagining

a meal of native foodstuffs as the first scene of her novel, Child supplements factual accounts of the nation's origin story to include references to the specific foods that, she – like Hale – believed, best reflected the tempered abundance of what was, by the 1820s, widely recognized as a republican sense of taste.²⁰

In *Hobomok*, as in her later writings, Child consistently employs imagined epicurean tableaux in order to assert that the sense of taste is not only central to the cultivation of a national identity for the United States, but that it can – and in fact, should – be purposefully refined. For instance, in the second significant scene of eating that appears in the book, the meal that welcomes Lady Arabella Johnson, a symbol of old world aristocracy, to the Naumkeak settlement, Mary Conant, the novel's protagonist, leads Arabella to a “pine table” covered with a “damask” cloth.²¹ Once seated at the table, Mary professes, “I have honored you more than ever did any guests in America.”²² In their subsequent conversation, Mary discloses her concern that the meal may prove as unpalatable to Arabella as that first breakfast did to the narrator. And if Child's nineteenth-century readers fail to immediately interpret the cultural significance of the meal, Arabella's response makes its meaning explicit: “I have come into the wilderness too,” she states, “and I must learn to eat hominy and milk, and forget the substantial plum puddings of England.”²³ Both in her words and through her actions, Arabella affirms her commitment to deliberately adapting her sense of taste to the realities of daily life in New England.

The version of taste that Arabella seeks to acquire, built upon the plain flavors of “hominy and milk” and the simple living symbolized by the “pine table,” hinges on the values and virtues that came to be associated with republican taste, even as the novel is set more than a century earlier. Child here invests the preference for simple American ingredients with additional ideological import (perhaps anticipating that she would frame her cookbook, *The Frugal Housewife*, published a short five years later, in 1829, as a treatise on the virtues of economical eating). Lady Arabella, when subsequently entreated to “taste” some venison, a luxurious dish prepared especially for her, declines the offer.²⁴ “No, thank you,” she responds, “I am going to try some of Mary's pumpkin and milk.”²⁵ This rejection of British luxury in favor of American simplicity is among the many instances that, as Mark McWilliams has argued, establish Child as a crucial voice in constructing the “myth of republican simplicity” that coalesced the literary works of the early nineteenth century.²⁶ Considered in a philosophical as well a cultural context, Arabella's decision to acquire a taste for “pumpkin and milk” also underscores Child's belief in the deliberateness with which her version of republican taste must be acquired.

After the publication of *Northwood*, Hale committed herself to her editorial work, launching her campaign for a national Thanksgiving holiday from the pages of *Godey's Lady's Book*, which she began to edit in 1837. Like Hale, Child also edited a magazine for women and children, *The Juvenile Miscellany*. But her intellectual efforts soon took a more overtly political turn. After composing a radical (for its time) antislavery text, *An Appeal in Favor of that Class of Americans Called Africans* (1833), and enjoying a stint as editor of the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* (1842–3), the official newspaper of the American Anti-Slavery Society, Child returned to fiction. “Formed as my character now is,” she explained in an 1844 letter to Francis Shaw, “I cannot do otherwise than make literature the honest agent of my conscience and my heart.”²⁷ In literature, Child realized her most fruitful opportunity to shape the tastes of others – tastes that, she believed, would encourage each of her readers to contribute to a more just and equitable United States. Child thus recommitted herself to the cause of Indian rights that had defined her earliest literary interventions, envisioning a nation that would welcome all inhabitants of North American soil, regardless of culture or race.

In the case of both displaced Native peoples and enslaved African Americans – the other group of people who occupied her focus in the second half of her life – Child identified the sense of taste as the mechanism that would prompt the collective action that, she maintained, would bring about necessary social and political change. In “Willie Wharton,” a short story that appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1863 – the same year that Hale composed her Thanksgiving letter – Child consolidates the national sense of taste that she began to formulate in *Hobomok* – one that, while inclusive in its conception of citizenship, and premised on admirable social and political ideals, remains limited by her narrow sense of what American culture should properly entail.

For the most part, the plot of “Willie Wharton” follows a traditional trajectory of captivity and restoration: The eponymous protagonist, lost in the woods as a child, is carried away by Indians; twenty years later, he returns to his family – with his Indian wife, A-lee-lah. Child’s story becomes an important exploration of the cultivation of taste as she depicts the Wharton family’s embrace of A-lee-lah, and their thoughtful (if, from a twenty-first century vantage-point, fundamentally misguided) attempts at cultural conversion. Child confirms her own colonialist biases at the same time that she mounts a critique of those less progressive than herself, as she demonstrates both how readily A-lee-lah adapts her instinctual affinities in order to conform to white standards of taste, and how stubbornly certain other

characters, bound by their cultural and racial prejudices, resist accepting A-lee-lah's full membership in their society.

As opposed to the New England setting of *Hobomok*, Child locates this story about the cultural and philosophical dimensions of the development of a national sense of taste in “one of our Western States,” and chooses a timeframe that is contemporaneous with her own writing.²⁸ Indicating an awareness of the rapidity of US colonial expansion, the narrator of “Willie Wharton” notes how the “landscape had greatly changed” during the two decades that Willie had been away from his family.²⁹ But Child also presents Willie’s absence from his family in terms of his absence from the table. During his time away, the narrator reports that Willie’s “chair retained its place at the table,” even as “out of the family he was nearly forgotten.”³⁰ Underscoring a point that her dedicated readers would already have intuited, Child insists that the dining table serves as the foundation, both material and metaphoric, from which national taste extends.³¹

Child further emphasizes the extended significance of the table, and of the particular foods it holds, as she stages Willie’s return to his family on Thanksgiving Day. Recalling Child’s own family tradition, the narrator relates how “wild turkeys were prepared for roasting, and the kitchen was redolent of pies and plum-pudding,” while the entire extended family, “Father, Emma, Uncle George, Aunt Mary, Bessie and her young Squire, Charles’s wife, baby, and all,” were there to welcome Willie to his familial – and, implied, cultural – home.³² Although it would not be until six months after the publication of this story that Thanksgiving Day would be declared a national holiday, Child’s readers – the same as Hale’s – would have nevertheless understood the cultural implications of this festive scene. By the 1860s, foods native to New England, such as wild turkey, plum-pudding, and pumpkin pie, were increasingly bound to a national origin story. Child’s readers would therefore have easily interpreted the bounty of the Wharton Thanksgiving table as symbolizing the nation, as well as the family, as a cultural whole.³³

Child further accentuates the consolidating function of food and eating as she describes how the Wharton family “guide[s]” the newly arrived couple “into increasing conformity with civilized habits.”³⁴ As in the scene in *Hobomok* in which Mary Conant is observed by Hobomok feeding their son, Child again emphasizes the experience of eating, as much as the particular foods consumed, as important to the process of individual acculturation. Significantly, at the dinner Willie’s brother Charles takes “every precaution to have his brother appear as little as possible like a savage,” including supervising the preparation of the food to be served: “Without mentioning that [Willie] would like raw meat better than all their dainties,

[his brother] went to the kitchen to superintend the cooking of some Indian succotash, and buffalo-steak *very* slightly broiled.”³⁵ This subtle shift toward the Anglo-American style of preparing meat, instead of indulging the (presumed) Indian preference for serving meat raw, establishes the Wharton family’s approach – consistent with Child’s own view – of gradually exposing Willie and A-lee-lah to more culturally sanctioned principles of manners and taste. At the same time, one cannot help but think that a reverse process of acculturation must also be taking place, as the Wharton family becomes more acclimated – by dint of exposure – to Willie and A-lee-lah’s Indian tastes as well.

In her analysis of another short story of Child’s – a tale involving a white girl, Mary French, and her black friend, Susan Easton, who are kidnapped and sold into slavery – Brigitte Fielder underscores how Child crafts each character so as to represent a specific attitude toward anti-black racism.³⁶ Here, Child’s deliberate depiction of a range of responses to Willie and A-lee-lah’s relationship appears to be deployed with a similar intent: encouraging readers to evaluate, for themselves, the appropriateness of each character’s response. The members of Willie’s immediate family, for example, act on their conviction that both Willie and his Indian wife are capable of internalizing appropriately “American” standards of taste. As they gently acclimate Willie and A-lee-lah to the family’s cultural preferences, Willie demonstrates immediate acuity. The narrator describes how Willie regains his use of the English language “with a rapidity that might have seemed miraculous, were it not a well-known fact that one’s native tongue forgotten is always easily restored.”³⁷ The Whartons devote additional attention to A-lee-lah, who – it is implied – has much more to learn, but they employ the same method as with Willie. Just as “everything was done to attract William to [the American] mode of life, but still no remark was made when he gave a preference to Indian customs,” so, too, with regard to A-lee-lah, the family “agree[s] not to manifest any distaste for Indian fashions.”³⁸ Under this regime, A-lee-lah becomes “almost as skillful at her needle as she [once] was weaving baskets and wampum.”³⁹ In addition, “her taste for music improved,” and “her taste in dress changed also.”⁴⁰ In this way, Child conveys to her readers her own belief in the natural affinities of indigenous peoples for white American culture – affinities that, according to the overall message of “Willie Wharton,” need only to be cultivated and refined. While she does nothing to overturn the insidious view of indigenous cultures as easily displaced, Child nonetheless frames A-lee-lah’s ability to be “guided” into “conformity” with the conventions of white society as a positive trait.⁴¹

In a manner that again recalls *Hobomok*, and in what would become a recurrent theme of her fiction, Child concludes “Willie Wharton” with

a short account of the child of Willie and A-lee-lah. However, Child's description of the girl, Jenny, offers a subtle evolution from her portrayal of the son of Hobomok and Mary Conant. The son of Hobomok, whose "Indian appellation" is "silently omitted" only "by degrees," is sent away to England; colonial America cannot yet embrace him or the mixture of cultures that he represents.⁴² Jenny, on the other hand, whose name does not disclose her multiracial background, flourishes in the United States of the 1860s. The narrator relates that she is "universally admitted to be the prettiest and brightest child in the village."⁴³ Mr. Wharton reports that "her busy little mind makes him think of his Willie, at her age," and her Uncle Charles "says he has no fault to find with her, for she has her mother's beautiful eyes and wears her hair 'like folks.'"⁴⁴ Taken together, these comments suggest that Jenny's cultivated intellect derives from Willie, as part of her white inheritance. And with the mention that she "has her mother's beautiful eyes," she appears to transform her Indian beauty so as to adhere to white standards of taste.

With the cultural (and gender) hierarchy encoded in this description of Jenny, it is difficult not to view the overall message of "*Willie Wharton*" in terms of the "imperial process of civilizing" that Amy Kaplan identifies, in her influential essay on Hale.⁴⁵ It is nevertheless worth considering that in contrast to Hale's exclusionary conception of the "American" home – which, according to Kaplan, "makes race central to woman's sphere not only by excluding nonwhites from domestic nationalism but also by seeing the capacity for domesticity as an innate, defining characteristic of the Anglo-Saxon race" – Child's story of Willie and A-lee-lah Wharton suggests a more inclusive conception of the nation.⁴⁶ Still, it remains difficult to overlook Child's inclination to subsume indigenous cultural influences within an already dominant Anglo-American national identity. What I suggest is not that we disregard these significant contradictions.⁴⁷ Rather, following Fielder, I believe that our most accurate assessment comes when we closely examine the responses of individual characters to evaluate the more specific views that each represents. Child's divergent characterizations of the Whartons' extended family, friends, and neighbors, and their varied difficulties in accepting A-lee-lah, thus become a localized critique of the negative effects of prejudice – if not white cultural supremacy – on that era's sense of taste. By incorporating these negative responses into her narrative, Child reinforces her own position on the value of the sense of taste. Because it is instilled and assessed from within, it is less susceptible to the damaging social pressures that can interfere with the exercise of personal taste.

In fact, "*Willie Wharton*" offers a direct indictment of standards of taste that are adopted without regard to inner principle. Shortly after Willie's

return, for example, his cousin, Bessie, remarks to her father: “I feel as if I ought to invite William and his wife to dine with us, but if any of my husband’s family should come in, I should feel so mortified to have them see a woman with a blanket over her shoulders sitting at my table!”⁴⁸ “Besides,” she adds, “they like raw meat, and that is dreadful!”⁴⁹ Once again, the table serves as the stage for this drama of acculturation. In this particular account, it is clear that although Bessie “feel[s]” that she should welcome Willie and his wife with an invitation to a family dinner, she cannot reconcile her instinctual kindness with her concern for other’s judgments of A-lee-lah, and perhaps more significantly, their judgments of her.

In keeping with Child’s view, it is ultimately Bessie’s behavior, and not A-lee-lah’s, that is cast as being worthy of further scrutiny. Bessie’s father, offering a “philosophical way of viewing the subject,” suggests that the issue is, both literally and figuratively, a matter of taste.⁵⁰ “Certainly it is not pleasant,” he states, “but I once dined in Boston, at a house of high civilization, where the odor of venison and of Stilton cheese produced much more internal disturbance than I have ever experienced from any of their Indian messes.”⁵¹ This example of a meal at a “house of high civilization” that nonetheless smelled worse – and “produced much more internal disturbance” – than “any of their Indian messes” exposes the difference between a thoughtless adherence to social standards, as opposed to the cultivation of taste from within. The father’s “philosophical way of viewing the subject” reveals to his daughter, and to Child’s readers, the deeper significance that is present, even if not always acknowledged, in many matters of taste. It reveals, moreover, how Child understood her readers’ ability to inhabit her characters’ subject positions – in other words, to activate their sympathetic imaginations – as the process that would lead to the cultivation of their own, socially aware sense of taste.

In the most generous of interpretations, it might be said that the hegemony of white culture is challenged by the events described in “Willie Wharton.” After all, Willie and A-lee-lah are first identified as “representatives of races widely separated by moral and intellectual culture.”⁵² Upon their return, however, the “more enlightened portion of the community” responds in a positive manner to Willie and A-lee-lah, while others who are “not distinguished either for moral or intellectual culture” – the same phrase first used to distinguish Anglo from Indian – “sneer” at the Wharton family’s decision to embrace the couple.⁵³ Child contrasts these undistinguished citizens with Willie’s parents, who “had been so long in the habit of regulating their actions by their own principles”; not surprisingly, his parents make the more culturally tolerant choice in welcoming A-lee-lah into their home and family.⁵⁴ By adopting the language of self-regulation, Child suggests that

personal taste should guide each US citizen in his or her interactions with others – and, ideally, in his or her political action as well.

Indeed, from the first “plentiful” breakfast that Child describes in *Hobomok*, served on a plain pine table and consisting of pumpkins, clams, and maize, to this expression of US culture at mid-century, Child’s work chronicles the origins and evolution of a national sense of taste. This conception emerges from ideas about eating, and the way in which individuals process sensory experience according to their own internal judgment, and it extends it into a call for a cultural identity that would unite the increasingly fractured nation. In this way, Child distances herself from the more progressive figures of the age who did not require a single cultural identity in order to constitute the nation. But her belief in the individual capacity to cultivate a sense of taste continued to set her apart from those who excluded non-white citizens as a matter of course.

In addition, Child’s explicit acknowledgment of the interdependence of eating and aesthetic taste, and how both informed political opinion, prompts a closer consideration of the emergence of modern food politics and its connection to imaginative fiction. Today, we can easily interpret an individual’s decision to consume local and organic foods as reflective of an anti-capitalist political stance; or to dine out at farm-to-table restaurants as indicative of a commitment to environmental sustainability. And yet, these seemingly personal choices are premised on a series of internal associations which connect individual choices in what or how to eat to a larger values and ideals. These associations, as the fiction of Child helps to show, are forged in the imagination as much as in the foodstuffs themselves. They demonstrate, ultimately, how the imagination has always functioned as a vehicle for calling into existence future possible worlds – those brought about by social and political change, and those brought about by fiction.

Notes

1. Only two primary accounts of the first Thanksgiving at Plymouth Plantation are known to exist: Edward Winslow’s *Mourt’s Relation* (1621) in which he documents the “fowle” and “five Deere” that were killed for the feast; and William Bradford’s *Of Plimouth Plantation*, which describes the “great store of wild Turkies,” “peck a meale,” and “Indean corn to yt proportion” which (partially) comprised the feast. For accessible editions of these and other sources, see *The Plymouth Colony Archive Project*, ed. Patricia Scott Deetz, James Deetz, and Christopher Fennell: www.histarch.illinois.edu/plymouth. Accessed June 1, 2018.
2. The ideology of republicanism encompasses both a commitment to the republican (as opposed to monarchical) style of government that supplied the model for the

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United States, and the values and ideals associated with it. These include the value of liberty and the notion of specific and inalienable individual rights, as well as importance of civic virtue and other cultural ideals, to be discussed further in this chapter.

3. It would not be until 1939, in response to concerns about a shortened Christmas shopping season, that President Franklin D. Roosevelt would move the date of the national Thanksgiving holiday one week earlier, to the third Thursday of the month. The new date would be codified into law two years later, in 1941.
4. Sarah Josepha Buell Hale, “Our National Thanksgiving,” *Godey’s Lady’s Book* (November 1858), 463.
5. Carolyn Korsmeyer summarizes the evolution of the term: “In Baumgarten’s 1750 work, *Aesthetica*, the term ‘aesthetic’ became particularly associated with beauty. In the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), Kant used ‘aesthetic’ to refer to sense perception; in the *Critique of Judgment* (1790) he employed it to refer to judgments of Taste, or the judgment that something is beautiful. The term ‘aesthetic’ was not used in English until the nineteenth century.” She further explains how, during the early eighteenth century, “the sense of taste stands right next to aesthetic Taste in philosophical writings.” *Making Sense of Taste: Food and Philosophy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002), 42 n10, 40. In *Taste: A Literary History*, Gigante argues, more specifically, that as a “new mode of embodied cognition,” the physicality of the sense of taste “provided access” to the aspects of human experience left unexplained by Enlightenment theories of the rational mind (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005), 6.
6. Garry Wills’s *Inventing America: Jefferson’s Declaration of Independence* offers the foundational work on the subject (New York: Doubleday, 1978). Numerous authors, including Lance Banning, Drew McCoy, Lori Merish, David Shi, David S. Shields, and Michael Warner have taken up and refined this claim.
7. Elizabeth Maddock Dillon, “Sentimental Aesthetics,” *American Literature* 76.3 (September 2004), 498.
8. David S. Shields, *Civil Tongues & Polite Letters in British America* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 196; Michael Warner, *The Letters of the Republic: Publication and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), xiv.
9. George Washington Park Custis and Mary Randolph Custis Lee, *Recollections and Private Memoirs of Washington* (Philadelphia, PA: J.W. Bradley, 1861), 422.
10. Qtd. in Damon Lee Fowler, ed., *Dining at Monticello: In Good Taste and Abundance* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 19.
11. See Lauren F. Klein, “Dinner-Table Bargains: Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and the Senses of Taste,” *Early American Literature* 49.2 (Spring 2014), 403–33; and Lauren F. Klein, *An Archive of Taste: Race and Eating in the Early United States* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2020).
12. Sarah Josepha Hale, *Northwood; Or, Life North and South: Showing the True Character of Both* (Boston, MA: Bowles and Dearborn, 1826).
13. Thomas Wentworth Higginson, “Lydia Maria Child,” *Eminent Women of the Age; Being Narratives of the Lives and Deeds of the Most Prominent Women of the Present Generation*, ed. James Parton, et al. (Hartford: S.M. Betts, 1868), 41.

14. Lydia Maria Child, *Hobomok and Other Writings on Indians*, ed. Carolyn L. Karcher (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1986), 7.
15. Child, *Hobomok and Other Writings*, 9.
16. “The dreams of an America of complete food security . . . proved elusive in the early years of settlement,” culinary historian Trudy Eden explains in *The Early American Table: Food and Society in the New World* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010), 49. Also see Rachel Herrmann, “The ‘tragicall historie’: Cannibalism and Abundance in Colonial Jamestown,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 68.1 (January 2011), 47–74.
17. Child prided herself on her deep archival research. Carolyn Karcher documents how Child sought out relevant histories, narratives, journals, and other sources, for each of her major projects. See *The First Woman of the Republic: A Cultural Biography of Lydia Maria Child* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1994), 176.
18. Eden, *The Early American Table*, 3.
19. Mary Rowlandson, *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God. In American Captivity Narratives*, ed. Gordon Sayers (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2000), 147.
20. James McWilliams identifies 1796 – the year that saw the publication of Amelia Simmons’s *American Cookery, or the art of dressing viands, fish, poultry, and vegetables, and the best modes of making pastes, puffs, pies, tarts, puddings, custards, and preserves, and all kinds of cakes, from the imperial plum to plain cake: Adapted to this country, and all grades of life*, the cookbook widely viewed as the first “American” cookbook – as the year that marked the nation’s “culinary declaration of independence.” *A Revolution in Eating: How the Quest for Food Shaped America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 308. Although several British cookbooks, such as Eliza Smith’s *Compleat Houswife* (1727), Hannah Glasse’s *Art of Cookery Made Plain and Easy* (1747), and Susannah Carter’s *Frugal Housewife; Or, Complete Woman Cook* (1772), were in wide circulation, none included the recipes for “Tasty Indian Pudding,” “Pompkin” pie, or turkey with “cramberry-sauce” [sic], that Simmons included in her book. *American Cookery, or the art of dressing viands, fish, poultry, and vegetables, and the best modes of making pastes, puffs, pies, tarts, puddings, custards, and preserves, and all kinds of cakes, from the imperial plum to plain cake: Adapted to this country, and all grades of life*, 2nd ed., ed. Karen Hess (Bedford, MA: Applewood Books, 1996), 31, 34, 13.
21. Child, *Hobomok and Other Writings*, 97.
22. Child, *Hobomok and Other Writings*, 97.
23. Child, *Hobomok and Other Writings*, 97.
24. Child, *Hobomok and Other Writings*, 97.
25. Child, *Hobomok and Other Writings*, 98.
26. Mark McWilliams, “Distant Tables: Food and the Novel in Early America,” *Early American Literature*. 38.3 (September 2003), 365.
27. Qtd. in Karcher, *The First Woman of the Republic*, 301.
28. Child, *Hobomok and Other Writings*, 253.
29. Child, *Hobomok and Other Writings*, 271.
30. Child, *Hobomok and Other Writings*, 271.

31. Indeed, many women writers of the time identified the dining table – and the home more generally – as a key site of social and cultural influence. The scholarship on the “cult of true womanhood” or the “cult of domesticity,” a line of inquiry initiated by Barbara Welter in 1966 and developed (and challenged) in years since, positions Child and her contemporaries, including Hale as well as figures such as Catherine Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe, as leading proponents of a philosophy that invested women with the responsibility of instilling virtue via the home. See Welter, “The Cult of True Womanhood,” *American Quarterly* 18 (Summer 1966), 151–7; and the review essay by Linda Kerber, “Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman’s Place: The Rhetoric of Women’s History,” *The Journal of American History* (June 1988), 9–39, for a sense of this foundational scholarly work.
32. Child, *Hobomok and Other Writings*, 275.
33. In her analysis of contemporaneous works, Marie Drews similarly observes how the dinner table functioned as a potent symbol of democratic promise: Frederick Douglass, in *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855), “used his own inclusion at the table to illustrate the promising character of the North”; Hannah Crafts, in *The Bondwoman’s Narrative* (ca. 1850), “illustrates a scene of welcome and human interaction at a shared table”; and Harriet Wilson, in *Our Nig* (1859), employs the dinner table to “illustrate the inconsistencies of Northern practices at the local level.” The Thanksgiving scene in “Willie Wharton” supports Drews’s analysis. But as *Hobomok* makes plain, Child was already attuned to the symbolism of a shared table many years before these particular representations of food. See “Catharine Beecher, Harriet E. Wilson, and Domestic Discomfort at the Northern Table” in *Culinary Aesthetics and Practices in Nineteenth-Century American Literature*, eds. Monika Elbert and Marie Drews (New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2009), 93, 95, 90.
34. Child, *Hobomok and Other Writings*, 285.
35. Child, *Hobomok and Other Writings*, 277.
36. See Brigitte Fielder, “Those People Must Have Loved Her Very Dearly”: Interracial Adoption and Radical Love in Antislavery Children’s Literature,” *Early American Studies* 14.4 (Fall 2016), 749–80.
37. Child, *Hobomok and Other Writings*, 277.
38. Child, *Hobomok and Other Writings*, 280, 282.
39. Child, *Hobomok and Other Writings*, 287.
40. Child, *Hobomok and Other Writings*, 287.
41. There is more subtle work to be done in unpacking Child’s cultural colonialism. A recent essay by J. Kehaulani Kauanui, “A Structure, Not an Event: Settler Colonialism and Enduring Indigeneity,” in *Lateral: Journal of the Cultural Studies Association* 5.1 (Spring 2016) points to some possible avenues of entry.
42. Child, *Hobomok and Other Writings*, 150.
43. Child, *Hobomok and Other Writings*, 287.
44. Child, *Hobomok and Other Writings*, 287.
45. In constructing her larger argument about the meaning of the woman’s sphere, Kaplan focuses on the dual meaning of domesticity – not simply as the home, but also as a process of domestication, “which entails conquering and taming the wild, the natural, and the alien.” “Domestic in this sense,” Kaplan explains, “is related to the imperial process of civilizing, and the conditions of domesticity often

become markers that distinguish civilization from savagery. Through the process of domestication, the home contains within itself those wild or foreign elements that must be tamed; domesticity not only monitors the orders between the civilized and the savage but also regulates the traces of the savage within itself.” “Manifest Domesticity,” in *No More Separate Spheres: A Next Wave American Studies Reader*, eds. Cathy N. Davidson and Jessamyn Hatcher (Durham, NS: Duke University Press, 2002), 184.

46. Kaplan, “Manifest Domesticity,” 198.
47. In fact, important work has explored this contradiction in *Hobomok*, as well as in other of Child’s works. See Carolyn Sorisio, “The Spectacle of the Body: Torture in the Antislavery Writing of Lydia Maria Child and Frances E.W. Harper,” *Modern Language Studies* 30.1 (Spring 2000), 45–66, and Shirley Samuels, “Women, Blood, and Contract,” *American Literary History* 20.1–2 (Spring/Summer 2008), 57–75.
48. Child, *Hobomok and Other Writings*, 283.
49. Child, *Hobomok and Other Writings*, 283.
50. Child, *Hobomok and Other Writings*, 283.
51. Child, *Hobomok and Other Writings*, 283.
52. Child, *Hobomok and Other Writings*, 260.
53. Child, *Hobomok and Other Writings*, 285.
54. Child, *Hobomok and Other Writings*, 284.

5

KATE THOMAS

The Culinary Landscape of Victorian Literature

A Gastronomic Age

The stomach was an organ of intellect in the nineteenth century. The period proliferated “discourses of diet,” as philosophers, authors, and statesmen sought to describe and re-imagine culture through the gut.¹ Gastronomy was a literary genre, one that was, Denise Gigante tells us, “an expansion of the eighteenth-century discourse of aesthetic taste, a cultural field opening onto the material pleasures of appetite.”² It was an era that forged a new relationship between eating and reading: cookbooks emerged for the first time in commercial form and became best-sellers; realist novelists lingered over the dining table, attentive to the food their characters did and didn’t eat; the rise of the restaurant gave rise to “menus expanded like the novel to grandiose dimensions.”³ When William Makepeace Thackeray clasped his hands around his famously expansive belly and opined “Next to eating good dinners, a healthy man with a benevolent turn of mind must like, I think, to read about them,” his alliance of the pleasures of eating with the pleasures of reading gestured at an inter-relation between food and text that was newly possible in the Victorian era.⁴

It was, of course, an age of consumption. Industrial mass production and the rise of commodity culture produced a fiction in which all Victorians were consumers. Even if you couldn’t actually buy or eat, new plate-glass fronts to shops and restaurants and innovations in advertising invited – perhaps compelled – you to watch the buying and eating done by others. As a contributor to Dickens’s magazine *All the Year Round* put it, windows afforded a “perpetual and an inexhaustible feast.”⁵ Imperial expansion produced the illusion that the world was England’s marketplace, and, Thomas Richards tells us, “advertisers dug their pincers deep into the flesh of late-Victorian consumers.” The Crystal Palace housing the 1851 Great Exhibition was, as Richards describes it “a monument to consumption, the first of its kind, a place where the combined mythologies of consumerism appeared in concentrated form.”⁶

The kinds of appetites that were stimulated by the spectacles of the unrestrained marketplace could be perilous, and Victorians (prey already to consumption in the form of tuberculosis) worried about what they consumed, and what consumed them.⁷ In Christina Rossetti's 1862 poem "Goblin Market," goblin merchants proffer an a-seasonal, global cornucopia of luscious fruit. Laura eats it, but rather than becoming sated, she becomes insatiable. When she can't get the goblin fruit anymore, she wastes away like a victim of tuberculosis – consumed by her own consumerism. Victorians worried about being physically consumed. Dickens, for example, was "obsessed" with cannibalism both actual and metaphorical.⁸ As Gail Turley Houston describes it, Dickens published large numbers of essays on eating and cookery in *Household Worlds* because he believed that "the cannibalistic nature of the capitalist economy" could be alleviated "if England would abandon its debilitating eating practices."⁹ Dickens's fictions repeatedly figure the small boy at risk of being devoured and his boys join "half-starved" and preyed-upon girls in the work of writers such as the Brontë sisters.¹⁰ These children-made-meat were the embodiment of anxieties that consumer culture ate its young, that the body of the well-fed bourgeois Anglo subject was a cannibal aggregate of infantile, colonized Other bodies. Nancy Armstrong has turned to Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* (1865) to explore Victorian embodiments that were built from doubling; bodies that "colluded" with their body-doubles.¹¹ Armstrong points out that "All the problems with Alice's body begin and end with her mouth. With every mouthful of food comes certain loss of physical control" (16). Her body therefore displays the flux that Victorian consumption always entailed. The elite body, Armstrong argues, was mutually constituted by the working class, deviant, or racially Other body. Or if we reframe Armstrong's argument via the cannibal trope, we could say that elite Victorian body *ingested* its abjected Others. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is certainly structured by the ingestion of both text and aliment. Alice is, as Nina Auerbach observes, "ever-ravenous [...] a creature of curiosity and appetite" and Armstrong shows us how Wonderland is "made of both literature and food":¹² empty jars say "marmalade"; cake and beverage are inscribed "eat me" and "drink me"; mock turtles sing songs about the soup in which they might become an ingredient.¹³ These are all, Armstrong argues, reflections on consumption culture and on the relationship between being imperial and being imperiled: The "logic [of the new consumer culture] can link the colonial venture to the appetite of a little girl" (16).

Victorians – encountering a new world of industrial comestibles – also worried about consuming corrupting goods that could lead to illness or death. Some scholars have theorized that Alice's drinking and eating of

random foodstuffs is an allusion to Victorian worries over adulterated food. Although this was most certainly a prominent problem of the era, and one that came to a head in the 1850s, it might be that Alice's ingestive habits are more about the problem of what is possible adult-eration.¹⁴ That is to say, she has to navigate a kind of proto-adolescence, experiencing out-of-control growth spurts and also being too small for the furniture of her world – when she's finally small enough to fit through the tiny door, she can no longer reach the key to this door. She is half-mindful of fragments of rules and etiquettes taught her as ways to navigate an adult world that is none-the-less absurd. The madcappery of the tea-table hypothesizes that the rules and rituals of taking tea are indeed mad.¹⁵ Alice's Wonderland scrambles and mimics – adulterates – the rules of civility that are supposedly the key to the tiny door opening onto inclusion in bourgeois adult society.

Eating Civilly: Dining to Conform and Dining to Protest

Eating and drinking was, in the nineteenth century, a way of securing entry to and membership of protected social circles and professions. Gigante describes how the nineteenth-century dining table could act as an “engine of state” and there were many social and political institutions that used the taking of meals as a means to determine inclusion and exclusion. Gentlemen’s clubs were obvious arbitrators of class, politics, and national identity,¹⁶ and the act of dining was also a requirement of investiture at Oxbridge colleges and the Inns of Court. Albert D. Pionke points to dining as the “one quantitative requirement” that was applied to the students of the Inns of Court; “a student who had dined the appropriate number of times was deemed to have ‘kept commons.’” Compulsory dining had been formally ratified in 1798 and Pionke quotes an 1848 *History of the Inns of Court and Chancery*, explaining that the benefit of the dining requirement was the “making known the person of the student.” “Keeping commons,” then, was a ritual of both inclusion and exclusion.¹⁷

If aliment was used as a way of discriminating between people, people also discriminated between kinds of aliment. The nineteenth century witnessed a number of philosophical and political movements that eschewed certain food groups. In the Romantic era, pantheism joined hands with vegetarianism. “NEVER TAKE ANY SUBSTANCE INTO THE STOMACH THAT ONCE HAD LIFE,” Percy Bysshe Shelley commanded in his 1813 essay “A Vindication of Natural Diet.” Later in the century, a vegetarian diet would become allied with pacifism, spiritualism, socialism, anti-vivisectionism, and the women’s suffrage movement.¹⁸ In 1886, vegetarian rights activist Henry Salt wrote “If those who live selfishly on the labour of others are rightly

denounced as ‘blood-suckers,’ do not those who pamper a depraved appetite at the expense of much animal suffering deserve a somewhat similar appellation?” Salt’s invocation of “blood-suckers” was a late-century piece of rhetoric that echoed the *topos* of an earlier food protest. At the end of the eighteenth century, anti-saccharites had used an abstinence campaign in which sugar was figured as contaminated with the blood and suffering of the enslaved workers who had produced it. The success of the campaign had harnessed the power of food as a medium, capable of signification and resignification.

The Rise of the Cookbook, Cooking the Books of Gender

Isabella Beeton’s *Book of Household Management* (1859) was a mid-century publishing sensation that has endured as a brand name well beyond its era. It reportedly sold over 60,000 copies in its first year of publication, and nearly two million by 1868. Hers was not the first commercially successful nor the first innovative cookbook – Eliza Acton’s *Modern Cookery for Private Families* had been published in 1844, and it was Acton who employed what she called “novel features,” such as a summarizing list of ingredients. Beeton followed suit, and further divided the recipe into segments with the headings “Ingredients,” “Mode,” “Time,” “Average cost,” “Sufficient,” and “Seasonable.” Beeton’s novel emphasis upon categorization was matched by her similarly novel regard for measuring. “Among the most essential requirements of the kitchen are scales,” she wrote, and she included illustrations of graduated measuring cylinders. In these ways, *BBOHM* was novel, but it was also significantly unoriginal, in that it comprised a good deal of cut-and-pasting from unacknowledged sources.¹⁹ It was, however, monumentally compendious in both its scope and its epistemic stance: it was nostalgic for the old ways of life and food production that were being lost, but also embracing of new, mass-produced, proprietary comestibles. The commercial cookbook was born in the nineteenth century because life under industrial capital had divorced middle-class women from domestic knowledge. Culinary and household knowledge was no longer preserved within the more feudal formations of family and estate, and the commonplace books containing family recipes needed a commercial counterpart. In many ways it was reconfigurations of gender roles that produced the need for commercial cookbooks. An interesting effect, however, of this commercialization is that it sometimes ventriloquized gender.²⁰

Tabitha Tickletooth, for example, was an alias for actor and dramatist Charles Selby who appears in drag in the frontispiece of his 1860 book, *The Dinner Question or How to Dine Well & Economically*. Selby/Tickletooth

hopes that the cookbook will make the “lady of the house” “competent to superintend the arrangements of her kitchen” and the word “superintend” recalls Beeton’s opening sentence, in which she compares the mistress of a house with “the commander of an army.”²¹ The unmooring of the recipe book from the hand-written, family-bound form of the commonplace book allowed a degree of unmooring from gender.

Just, however, a degree. Commercial cookbooks also sought to bind both dining and wifedom to the domestic space – and make the domestic attractive to a husband through wife-designed dining. Cookbooks were seen as a way of improving a husband’s experience of homelife, encouraging him to dine with his wife and family, rather than at his gentleman’s club. In the 1852 collection of menus *What Shall We Have for Dinner?* Charles Dickens’s wife Catherine assumes the pen-name and role of “Lady Clutterbuck.” The book has a jaunty little introduction, flushed with innuendo that befits the choice of pseudonym; it comes from a French farce and is the name of a foolish widow, a role which Catherine played when Dickens put on the play in 1851. Lady Clutterbuck reminisces about how her pleasing her cooking was to her husband “Sir Jonas Clutterbuck,” who was “endowed” with good appetite and digestion, “to those endowments I was indebted (though some years the junior of my revered husband) for many hours of connubial happiness.” Lady Clutterbuck tut-tuts over the poor state of her female friends’ “domestic relations.” She blames unappetizing home meals for “making the Club more attractive than the Home, and rendering ‘business in the city’ of more frequent occurrence than it used to be in the earlier days of their connubial experience.”²² Catherine was the wife with whom Dickens had ten children before abandoning her, which lends particular pathos to “Lady Clutterbuck’s” claim that her culinary skills produced lasting marital felicity: “I am consoled in believing that my attention to the requirements of his appetite secured me in the possession of his esteem until the last.”²³ The plot thickens further if we take on board the opinion of some scholars that this preface was in fact authored by Dickens himself.²⁴

Reading as Eating

We can find metaphors of reading as eating before the nineteenth century, before industrialization. But reading and writing that is subject to voracious appetites, to the extremes of starvation and greed, was new and particular to the nineteenth century. Between them, Charles Dickens, who had known starvation, and William Thackeray, who was a famous and self-proclaimed glutton, licked that particular platter clean.

Dickens's writing life caught stride in the decade that would become known as the "Hungry Forties," a time of famine and profit-derived food insecurity that plagued much of Europe. But we can also read it meta-critically. Dickens knew that some of his readers knew hunger. He also knew that they were "hungry" for his fiction. Dickens wrote for a mass audience that was in his own time, and then subsequently described as "voracious." When D.A. Miller, for example, praises *Bleak House* for being able to both "gratif[y] our appetite for closure" and "provide superior nourishment by keeping us hungry,"²⁵ he is using a reading-as-eating, writing-as-being-consumed metaphor that Dickens himself used. In "The Uncommercial Traveller," Dickens describes a drama at the morgue in which there are narrators, complete with mass audiences and literary rivals: "rivals attracted audiences, and were greedily listened to."²⁶ Dickens also portrays what happens when you lose your "readership"; he describes impatient listeners beating at the gates holding them "as if they were of the cannibal species and hungry" (203). When Dickens made his famous description of melodrama, he turned to an alimental metaphor; tragedy and comedy should be layered, he said, like the red and the white in a side of streaky bacon. In *Little Dorrit* (1855–7), Dickens's novel that directly portraits the debtors' prison into which his own family had been thrown, the simple-minded young woman Maggy has a "voracious appetite for stories." Nineteenth-century essayist Walter Bagehot describes Dickens as having the capacity to walk down a crowded street then recall "how many scraps of orange-peel there were on the pavement." Dickens's "sensibility to external objects," Bagehot writes, was "omnivorous."²⁷ Contemporary scholars writing on Dickens also reach for alimental metaphors. In *Consuming Fictions*, Gail Turley Houston quotes Peter Brooks saying Dickens had "devouring presses" that he "had to feed" and that Dickens himself metaphorized the periodical business as poised between "feast and famine."²⁸

As critic and biographer John Carey writes, "Nothing meant more to Thackeray than food, except perhaps drink."²⁹ Thackeray loved to eat, and he also loved to write and read about eating. He wrote recipes, reviewed recipe books, and on several occasions modeled characters on his friend and partner-in-gluttony, French celebrity chef Alexis Soyer. Food formed "an unfailing source of vitality" for his writing life; "his scenes," Carey observes, "spring to life around their eatable and drinkable bits."³⁰ Eating, writing, and reading were, for Thackeray, intimately entwined pleasures. The plate colours his page, and the page could summon up for him the pleasures of the plate. In "Memorials of Gormandizing," an 1841 essay that extols "the art of eating and drinking," the narrator describes reading bills of fare "over which

I have cried; and the reading of them [...] made me [...] ferociously hungry.”³¹

This is no mere connoisseurship that Thackeray describes; weeping and ferocity are extravagant emotional states. They convey excess. And Thackeray was not only a gourmand, but a plus-sized glutton. He structured his life – perhaps even his death – around what he called “guttling and gorging.”³² His first published story, “The Professor” (1837) was about a man with an insatiable appetite for shellfish. In “On a Lazy Idle Boy,” Thackeray pursues an extended “allegory,” as he calls it, equating novels with sweets; “All people with healthy literary appetites love them.” The narrator toys with the idea that the lazy boy he finds devouring a novel as if it were “jelly” might get “glut” himself and get sick of them, but then declares that the moral of his allegory is that “the appetite for novels extending to the end of the world [...] the demand being what we know it is, the merchant must supply it.”³³ Thackeray’s playful vision is of a literary appetite that encircles the belly of the globe and is both insatiable and boundless. It is an “allegory” that conflates the omniscient with the omnivorous.

Where do Authors Eat

In Thackeray’s ideal world, eating would be thought of at all times, everywhere. Via *Punch*, Thackeray wrote a spoof letter to a fictitious Cambridge University committee, arguing for the establishment of a chair dedicated to the study of eating. He signed the badly written letter “Corydon Soyer” and the author argues that the “Soyer Professorship of Culinarious Science” would enable the university graduates to teach the inhabitants of “a distant and barbarous province” how to improve their diet and live more harmoniously.³⁴ Alexander Soyer, who Thackeray repeatedly fictionalized in his stories, had opened a mansion called Gore House, which under the ownership of Marguerite, Lady Blessington and her stepson-in-law, Alfred, Count D’Orsay, had become a palace to their extravagant tastes and a flourishing literary salon. Dickens, Thackeray, Bulwer Lytton, Walter Landor, and Disraeli were all regulars. When the debt-beset couple were finally run to ground by their creditors, Soyer took over the mansion with the intention of turning it into not just a restaurant, but a nineteenth-century “Eataly,” dedicated to culinary and other pleasures. “He had in mind,” writes biographer Ruth Cowan, “a whole cluster of exotic eateries unprecedented in scale and luxuriousness – a culinary pleasure garden, in effect. And it would satisfy more than the appetite, it would be a feast for all the senses, encompassing art and sculpture, music, awe-inspiring special effects and all

manner of mechanical innovations.”³⁵ It would serve all classes, all purses, and it would serve them all manners of cuisine. Named *Soyer’s Universal Symposium of All Nations*, it was designed to rival the Great Exhibition at which Soyer had declined to provide the catering.

George Augustus Sala, whose later career as a journalist was forged under the patronage of Dickens and *Household Words*, was hired by Soyer to paint an enormous mural that ran up all three storeys of the house and depicted a throng of public figures, living and dead, comically hastening to the Great Exhibition. Guests were then supposed to knock on a door, to be greeted by a footman who told them that if they were looking for the Great Exhibition, they were in the wrong place. It was a convoluted joke, but it demonstrates that Soyer wished to hang onto the coat tails of the mass spectacle and congregation inaugurated by the Exhibition. The first function held at the Symposium was a fund-raising dinner for the Metropolitan Sanitary Association, whose members included both Thackeray and Dickens. Soyer held a press dinner, to which he invited the more than 300 reporters who had gathered in London for the opening of the Great Exhibition. The casting of his nets so wide caught up a curious guest: Cowan points out that the impoverished and unemployed journalist Karl Marx attended this free and lavish feast.³⁶ Marx’s slipping into the ranks of the diners emphasizes a key point: that this *universal* symposium sought to cater to an “everyone” that had been made newly manifest. Soyer’s symposium was compendious and encyclopedic, which made it kin not only to the Great Exhibition, but also to *Beeton’s Book of Household Management* and also – as I will shortly show – to the fat Victorian novel.

Episodic Reading, Episodic Eating

In the middle of the century, the British middle classes made a fundamental shift in how their dinners were served. Or at least, in how they aspired to best serve dinner. And it might be worth describing this shift using a literary term: dinners became serialized. The old way of serving dinner was *service à la Française*, in which the food was laid on the table all at once. This was superseded by *service à la Russe*, which involved courses being brought to the table sequentially. Culinary scholars’ accounts of this turn in fashion have focused on the rightly important social factors of the Napoleonic wars, the emergence of the restaurant, and the rising bourgeoisie’s need for class-distinguishing etiquettes.³⁷ We can also, however, make an account in which *service à la Russe* echoed the cultural rhythms of industrial production and consumption.³⁸ The nineteenth century was the century that had regularized clock time and had learned to live by train timetables, the whistles of

factory shifts, and “catching” the post. If these new technologies and networks segmented time, emergent fields of inquiry such as archaeology, geology, and biology, simultaneously asked people to apprehend its immensity. Linda K. Hughes and Michael Lund relate these two kinds of tempo to the literary form of serialization, defining the serial as a “continuing story over an extended time with enforced interruptions.”³⁹ This description also sounds very like *service à la Russe*; the entire menu had a single arc that was paced and regulated by servants. The most successful authors of nineteenth-century serial fiction knew how to manipulate the durations and interruptions of the story so that they became part of the story itself, and a large part of thrilling and satisfying their readers. Timing was everything. *Service à la Russe* similarly turned the dining room into a piece of clockwork. “Time governed the evening,” writes Valerie Mars.⁴⁰ “If pauses between each course are too long, if each guest is not supplied quietly and quickly with every want [...] also if the pauses between the courses are too short,” warns *Cassell’s Book of the Household*, “then the dinner will be a failure.”⁴¹ The fashioning of the meal’s intervals, in other words, was an integral part of satisfying the desires of the diner.

If the sequence of courses echoes publishing by numbers, the inter-relation between text and dining was made manifest by the appearance on the table of menus. *Service à la Russe* is when writing first appears on the dining table; “Choicely-printed menus are placed by the plate of each guest,” writes Charles Pierce in his 1857 guidebook *The Household Manager*.⁴² Andrea Broomfield points out “In the 1830s, a mistress turned to her seated guests and graciously informed them that they ‘saw their meal.’ Now, the guests were presented upon sitting down with a printed menu, listing the number of courses and what would be offered for each. Nothing was left to imagination.” Broomfield further observes “many mistresses combined the function of the menu with that of the name or place card.”⁴³ Extending Broomfield’s analysis, guests were able to “read” their dinner before they ate it.⁴⁴ The texts that appeared on tables, therefore, organized the characters, orchestrated the conversations, and gave dinners a plot. Other kinds of texts also sprang up alongside *service à la Russe*; because it required such intricate plotting; Valerie Mars explains that “[t]his new way of dining begat a torrent of didactic works,” in the form of etiquette and household books.⁴⁵ And these etiquette books contained instructions that can make them sound like kissing cousins to the novel: “When a note of invitation to dinner is written, it should be in the third person.”⁴⁶ Dinner had become narrativized.

Not only did new style of dinners have narrative, they also had omniscient narrators. *Service à la Russe* required an arsenal of servants, who oversaw everything. Indeed, the success of the service required them to be supremely

observant, responsive to diners' needs, interventionist and even predictive.⁴⁷ The diner was, in true post-industrial style, alienated from the labor of choosing and serving their own food.⁴⁸ What a diner ate was instead thoroughly mediated; dishes were selected, portioned, and ordered by a labor force that then watched, eavesdropped and became the motive force at the table. Anthony Trollope, a man with a strong sense of his own autonomy, disliked the practice. In *Framley Parsonage* (1860–1), his narrator lambasts meal-time practices of “handing round” as an “intolerable nuisance,” and “destructive of our natural comforts.” He admits that it can very indulgently pleasant to be served in conditions of perfect seriality: “Friends of mind who occasionally dine [in aristocratic houses] tell me that they get their wine quite as quickly as they can drink it, that their mutton is brought to them without delay, and that the potato-bearer follows quick upon the heels of carniver.” But for most, the service style can only be a “wretchedly vulgar aping of men with large incomes.” For those without the necessary number of servants, Trollope’s narrator laments that the consequence is cold food, or no food at all. His main resentment is against the enervations consequent to not serving oneself. He resents not being able to ask a lady if he might pour her some wine. He resents being “prohibited by a Medo-Persian law from all self-administration whatever” and misses “the good old days when I could hob-nob with my friend over the table as often as I was inclined to lift my glass to my lips, and make a long arm for a hot potato whenever the exigencies of my plate required it.” Trollope’s dining-table irritations are structured by what he characterizes as foreign: The rules are “Medo-Persian”; the service style is Russian; the wine-deficient lady reacts as if “I suggested that she should join me in a wild Indian war-dance, with nothing on but my paint.”⁴⁹ And what he misses he characterizes as solidly English: The word “hob-nob” is Old English in origin; potatoes are of course New World in origin, but became, as Catherine Gallagher has noted, “an icon of the autochthonous body.”⁵⁰ Trollope bitterly misses “the days when Christian men and women used to drink wine with each other.” He misses a kind of ruddy, equitable social muscularity.

Culinary historian Cathy K. Kaufman agrees with Trollope that *service à la Russe* interfered with social intercourse. The “mechanics of dining à la Française [...] encouraged an intimacy among diners.”⁵¹ Kaufman adjudicates between the two styles of service, interested by the “equality” of each plate under the Russian style, but she catches a “whiff of the standardizing assembly line,” a uniformity “which, ironically, eliminates part of the meal’s sense of communion”⁵² (127). Trollope’s desire to be allowed to reach for his own hot potato, or to ask a pretty young woman if she’d like him to pour her some wine is a desire for secular communion.⁵³ It is also a desire for desire

itself – gustatory, conversational, sexual – to retain a place at the table. His lament is a lament for the days when diners would, as Kaufman puts it, “share a common loaf.”⁵⁴ When the loaf is pre-sliced, Trollope complains, it divides people from each other and from expression of their embodied pleasures. The serialized dinner, this dinner-table with text on it, played a role in the privatization of social and libidinal life. This novelist famous for writing to a word count laments, perhaps, the way in which the textualization of the dinner table produces the alienation of the diner from other diners, an isolation akin to the loneliness, of the greedy novel reader, who, as Walter Benjamin would complain a century later, seizes literature, “ready to make it completely his own, to devour it, as it were.”⁵⁵

Notes

1. The phrase is Timothy Morton’s, *Shelley and the Revolution in Taste: The Body and the Natural World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 10. Morton also points out the etymological relation between the words “diet” and “culture.” Timothy Morton (ed.), *Cultures of Taste/Theories of Appetite: Eating Romanticism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 257.
2. Denise Gigante (ed.), *Gusto: Essential Writings in Nineteenth-Century Gastronomy* (New York: Routledge, 2005), xvii.
3. Gigante, *Gusto*, xxix.
4. W. M. Thackeray, *Miscellanies III: The Book of Snobs, Sketches and Travels in London, Denis Duval, and Other Stories* (Boston, MA: Fields, Osgood, & Co. 1869), 175.
5. Anon. “Looking in at Shop Windows” (June 12, 1869, 37–43), 43. The article is about consumerism in general, but is most animated by eating. The glassy gleam of the shop window is mirrored by thoughts of the “celestial sheen upon a Bath bun” (38). The author recalls the schoolboys’ contemplations of the confectioners’ windows: the spectacle of the cakes and tarts and jam puffs “nearly drove us to a frenzy” (20) and seeing “local swells” devour refreshments of which “there were maddening legends in the windows” drives them “insane” (40).
6. Thomas Richards, *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England: Advertising and Spectacle, 1851–1914* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990), 3.
7. Maud Ellman calls the logic of the self-consuming consumer the “autophagy of capital.” Maud Ellman, *The Hunger Artists: Starving, Writing and Imprisonment* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), 11.
8. Dickens biographer Fred Kaplan writes: “Many of [Dickens’s] potent descriptions of death and dying associate the bodies of the dead with food for the living. As an adult, he frequently expressed his feeling that he had become the sole source of food for an impossibly large family. From childhood on, he became obsessed with

- cannibalism, with images and scenes of human beings ingesting other human beings, of people being transformed into food, also with the act of eating, both as festival and as Thyestes' feast." Fred Kaplan, *Dickens: A Biography* (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1998), 6.
9. *Consuming Fictions: Gender, Class, and Hunger in Dickens's Novels* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1994), 4. Houston also notes that in the very last months of Dickens's life, "perhaps still seeking social harmony through cookery [...] he thought of a 'great scheme for writing a cookery book'" (4).
 10. See Carolyn Daniel *Voracious Children: Who Eats Whom in Children's Literature* (New York and London: Routledge, 2006), 42. Also Jacqueline M. Labbe "To Eat and Be Eaten in Nineteenth-Century Children's Literature," in Kara K. Keeling and Scott T. Pollard, *Critical Approaches to Food in Children's Literature* (New York and London: Routledge, 2009), 93–103.
 11. Nancy Armstrong, "The Occidental Alice," *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 2.2 (Summer 1990), 3–40 (14).
 12. Nina Auerbach, "Falling Alice, Fallen Women, And Victorian Dream Children," in Edward Giuliano and James R. Kincaid, *Soaring with the Dodo: Essays on Lewis Carroll's Life and Art*, Carroll Studies 6 (N.P.: The Lewis Carroll Society of North America and distributed by the University of Virginia Press, 1982), 46–64 (49); Armstrong, "The Occidental Alice," 18.
 13. Carroll's interest in the inter-relation between food and text is also illustrated in a letter he sends in 1869, in which he describes a book as "some thin slices of dried vegetables" (Qtd. in Kathleen Blake, *Play Games and Sport: The Literary Works of Lewis Carroll* [Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1974], 40). Paper is vegetable matter, he reminds his reader. Blake comments "writing a book becomes an ingenious and original way of preparing a food substance, making of a vegetable truly food for the mind" (40).
 14. In the first volume of *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy* (London: Penguin Books, 1990). Karl Marx described how the Englishman "had to eat daily in his bread a certain quantity of human perspiration mixed with the discharge of abscesses, cobwebs, dead cockroaches and putrid German yeast, not to mention alum, sand and other agreeable mineral ingredients" (359). In 1855 parliament set up a committee "On the adulteration of the articles of food," and in 1860 it passed a largely ineffective law "For preventing the adulteration of articles of food and drink."
 15. In 1855, a 23-year-old Carroll published "Hints for Etiquette; Or, Dining Out Made Easy," an article that satirized the highly popular genre of instruction books.
 16. Gigante, *Gusto*, xxxi. Membership of gentlemen's clubs swelled exponentially across the course of the nineteenth century. John Timbs, the author of *Club Life of London: With Anecdotes of the Clubs, Coffee-Houses and Taverns of the Metropolis* (London: Richard Bentley, 1866), celebrates the "tendency of men to associate for some common object" and identifies "eating and drinking" as the most common of common objects (1).
 17. Albert D. Pionke, *The Ritual Culture of Victorian Professionals: Competing for Ceremonial Status, 1838–1877* (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), 94.

18. Suffragettes would later use the refusal of all food – hunger-striking – as a way of protesting gender tyranny. “The hunger strike arrived in Britain on 5 July 1909,” writes James Vernon in *Hunger: A Modern History* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2007), 61.
19. For more on how Beeton’s book was a digest of “chewed-up sources,” see Kate Thomas, “Alimentary: Arthur Conan Doyle and Isabella Beeton,” *Victorian Literature and Culture* 36 (2008), 375–90, 386.
20. For an excellent long view on the practice of cross-gendered cookbook authorship, see Henry Notaker, *A History of Cookbooks: from Kitchen to Page Over Seven Centuries* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2017), 43–5.
21. Tabitha Tickleton, *The Dinner Question: Or How to Dine Well & Economically* (London: Routledge, Warne, and Routledge, 1860), 147; Isabella Beeton, *The Book of Household Management* (London: S. O. Beeton, 1861), 1.
22. Lady Maria Clutterbuck (alias Catherine Dickens), *What Shall We Have for Dinner? Satisfactorily answered by numerous bills of fare for from two to eighteen persons* (London: Bradbury and Evans, 1852), vi.
23. Clutterbuck, *What Shall We Have for Dinner*, v.
24. See, for example, Michael Slater, *Charles Dickens: A Life Defined by Writing* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 2009), 334. Catherine’s biographer, on the other hand, points out that “the records that surround authorship are wholly absent in her case” (189) and accounts of her authorship are clouded by sexism (186–9). Lilian Naydor, *The Other Dickens* (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press), 2011.
25. D. A. Miller, *The Novel and the Police* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988), 97.
26. Charles Dickens, *The Uncommercial Traveller*. With an Introduction by Peter Ackroyd. London: Mandarin Paperbacks, 1991. First published in 1861, 203.
27. Walter Bagehot, “Charles Dickens,” in *The Complete Works of Walter Bagehot*, ed. N. St John-Stevas (12 vols, London: The Economist, 1962), vol.2, 85.
28. Turley Houston, *Consuming Fictions*, 56.
29. John Carey, *Thackeray: Prodigal Genius* (London: Faber & Faber, 1977), 79.
30. Ibid., 82.
31. William Makepeace Thackeray, *The Works of William Makepeace Thackeray*, Volume 13 (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1900), 339, 336.
32. Carey, *Prodigal Genius*, 81. Carey describes Thackeray as a “big, blubber man” who, when nearing death, was reputed to have said “My exit is a result of too many entrees” (*Prodigal Genius*, 79). Dickens also feared the health effects of excessive eating: after bouts of biliousness and indigestion, he turns down an invitation to dine with Count D’Orsay “on account of my health which I am afraid may suffer from too much dining,” December 13, 1841. Madeline House and Graham Storey eds., *The Pilgrim Edition of the Letters of Charles Dickens Volume II, 1840–1841* (Oxford: Pilgrim, 1969), 497.
33. William Makepeace Thackeray, *The Works of William Makepeace Thackeray*, Volume 12 (London, Edinburgh and New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1900), 4, 5.
34. Ruth Cowan, *Relish: The Extraordinary Life of Alexis Soyer, Victorian Celebrity Chef* (London: Phoenix, 2007).

35. Ibid., 208.
36. Ibid., 224.
37. See ch. 7, “The Multiple Meanings and Purposes of Dining *a Lè Russe*,” in Andrea Broomfield, *Food and Cooking in Victorian England: A History* (Westport, CT and London: Praeger, 2007).
38. Food historian Annie Gray, who rightly emphasizes that the transition from service à la Française to service à la Russe was by no means easy or totalizing, argues: “in removing choice [...] and setting a timetable for eating, it in fact made the meal into an industrial experience” (233). Not only was timing regulated but also space. Gray points out that “à la Russe imposed behaviors through presentation of a range of specialist equipment in a restricted physical space. With no food on the table, diners had no need to reach outside their place setting” (234). “Perfection and Economy”: Continuity and Change in Elite Dining Practices, ca. 1780–1880,” in Alasdair Brooks ed., *The Importance of British Material Culture to Historical Archaeologies of the Nineteenth Century* (Lincoln, NE & London: University of Nebraska Press, 2015), 216–42.
39. Linda K. Hughes and Michael Lund, *The Victorian Serial* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1991), 1. Hughes and Lund also point out that serialization “harmonized in several respects with capitalist ideology [...] the part was a thing to be had for the time being yet also promised more to come, and the richness of detail and expansion of the text over time suggested a world of plenitude” (4).
40. Valerie Mars, ‘À la Russe’: The New Way of Dining,” in C. Anne Wilson, ed., *Eating with the Victorians* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, (1994) 2004), 112–38 (134).
41. *Cassell's Book of the Household: A Work of Reference on Domestic Economy*, Volume 1 (London, Paris, and Melbourne: Cassell and Company, Limited, 1890), 108.
42. Charles Pierce, *The Household Manager: Being a Practical Treatise Upon the Various Duties in Large or Small Establishments, from the Drawing-Room to the Kitchen* (London: Geo. Routledge & Co., 1857), 150.
43. Andrea Broomfield, *Food and Cooking in Victorian England: A History* (Westport, CT, London: Prager, 2007), 129.
44. They could also “read” their dinner *after* they ate it. After dining at Dickens’s house, fellow novelist and contributor to *Household Words*, Wilkie Collins, wrote to his mother describing the table decorations but “As for the dishes, I say nothing; having preserved my Bill of Fare, as a memorable document for my family to peruse when I come home.” Quoted in Susan M. Rossi-Wilcox, *Dinner for Dickens: The Culinary History of Mrs Charles Dickens's Menu Books* (Totnes: Prospect Books, 2005), 184. Rossi-Wilcox also points out that the Dickens family’s famed dinner parties were served, as Elizabeth Gaskell observed, “in the new fashion – not placed on the table at all – but handed round,” that is to say à la Russe (Rossi-Wilcox, 184).
45. Mars, “À La Russe,” 125.
46. *Etiquette for Ladies and Gentlemen* (London: Frederick Warne and Co., New York: Scribner, Welford, and Armstrong, 1876), 21.
47. My argument that the wait staff should be seen as omniscient finds support in the practice repeatedly employed in books of household management of

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- diagramming the dinner table and the sideboard, showing placement of all tableware and dishes from a bird's eye view.
- 48. It should be remembered that in prior forms of dining, not only were large numbers of dishes placed on the table all at once, from which diners made their own selections, but “[l]ittle distinction was made between sweet and savoury foods, so an apricot tart might share the table with a dish of green peas” (Mars, “À la Russe,” 79).
 - 49. Anthony Trollope, *Framley Parsonage* (London, 1861), 253–4.
 - 50. Catherine Gallagher, “The Potato in the Materialist Imagination,” in Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt, *Practicing New Historicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 110–36 (111).
 - 51. Cathy K. Kaufman, “Structuring the Meal: The Revolution of service a la russe,” in Harlan Walker, ed., *The Meal: Proceedings of the Oxford Symposium on Food and Cooking 2001* (Totnes: Prospect Books, 2002), 123–33 (125).
 - 52. Ibid., 127.
 - 53. That Trollope’s complaint comes to rest on, specifically, potatoes and wine is sacramental. Gallagher argues: “The potato in the materialist imagination [...] enjoys an uncanny resemblance to [...] the consecrated Host” (112).
 - 54. Kaufman, “Structuring the Meal,” 131.
 - 55. Walter Benjamin, “The Storyteller: Reflections on the Works of Nikolai Leskov,” in Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, Trans. Harry Zohn (Boston & New York: Mariner Books Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2019), 45.

6

ALLISON CARRUTH

Modernism and Gastronomy

Gastronomy – a field that mixes art and science in its ideas of eating well – found its match in the aesthetic and cultural experiments of literary modernism. Culinary concepts and the social lives and ethical meanings of those concepts preoccupy a transatlantic network of modernist writers, as J. Michelle Coghlan, Jennifer Fleissner, Catherine Keyser, and other scholars of literature and food have shown.¹ Some of these modernist writers cultivate what this essay terms *counter-gastronomic* satire, a rhetorical mode that illuminates relationships between high art and popular culture. In certain cases, playful adaptations of gastronomic principles and practices serve sharp critiques of cuisine, conviviality, and taste – critiques that also plumb the complex web connecting human eaters to other bodies. In others, a wry attitude toward gastronomy – especially as it coalesced in nineteenth-century France and then informed the mass media genre of the restaurant review in the twentieth-century – addresses inequalities between professional food writing and undervalued or exploitative food labor.

This chapter develops this account of modernism and gastronomy by way of three key texts: Italian avant-garde artist and writer F. T. Marinetti's *The Futurist Cookbook* (1932), Wisconsin poet Lorine Niedecker's *New Goose* volume (1946), and, finally, California culinary writer M. F. K. Fisher's cookbooks spanning the 1940s.² As for the first of these illustrations, *The Futurist Cookbook* marries the cultural nationalism that inflected French gastronomic literature during the nineteenth century with fascism. An example of what Cecilia Novero terms “antidiets of the avant-garde,” *The Futurist Cookbook* offers models of technologically fabricated dishes that aspire to build steel-like and masculine Italian bodies. To these ideological ends, the cookbook's manifestos and idiosyncratic recipes lambast Mediterranean culinary traditions (or what anthropologists term foodways).³ In contrast, Niedecker's *New Goose* encompasses satirical portraits of small-scale farmers going hungry during World War II even as those same farmers grow food for the war effort while affluent white Americans patronize gourmet restaurants. These short experimental lyrics implicitly reject the cultural

nationalism of both gastronomy and fascism in advancing an ethos of regional identity and collective community. Finally, M. F. K. Fisher's cookbooks, penned in the 1940s, adapt a modernist narrative style to the genre of the gourmet cookbook while employing irony and satire to express dissent with the status of gastronomy in the context of wartime food rationing.

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Gastronomic writing does not fit neatly into a single tradition or genre. Within the Western literary and philosophical traditions, for instance, the field includes guidebooks, manuals, treatises, memoirs, and restaurant reviews. Across these distinct genres, gastronomic authors tend to share in common a rhetorical tact of influencing readers' consumer behaviors by titillating their appetites. To that end, they employ literary techniques to attract readers with not just practical advice but also compelling stories – or what Fisher describes as “good escape-reading material.”⁴ To establish gastronomy as a form of literature, some authors link their work to that of novel writing. American cookbook author James Beard fosters this affinity between food writing and fiction in his 1964 memoir *Delights and Prejudices*, where he cites Marcel Proust's Madeleine-inspired modernist novel: “When Proust recollected the precise taste sensation of the little scalloped Madeleine cakes served at tea by his aunt, it led him into his monumental remembrance of things past. When I recollect the taste sensations of my childhood, they lead me to more cakes, more tastes.”⁵ This juxtaposition of Proust's multi-volume novel and Beard's culinary memoir arguably seeks to elevate the latter to the status of imaginative literature by crafting remembered experiences of eating into modernist narrative structures.⁶

The term “gastronomy” originated in ancient Greek, where it referred to the meticulous study of the stomach. The word and its cultural meanings have traveled widely since then. As a 1907 survey titled *Dining and Its Amenities* notes, “the Greeks of Attica gleaned from the Persians their notions of luxury and cookery, about which Archestratus wrote a poem bearing the title of *Gastrologia or Gastronomia*.⁷ Chinese gastronomy dates to at least the eighth century CE, and extends from dietary commentaries found in Confucianism and Daoism to cookbooks focused on *yang-sheng* (practices of mental and physical well-being).⁸ As in other contexts, the intersecting histories of gastronomy and literary culture in both early modern and modern China comprise varied forms of expression: among them, the culinary tenets found in philosophical and religious texts, the recipes and health advice of cookbooks, and evocative accounts of dining out in tourist guidebooks.⁹ Returning to Europe, the term first entered modern usage in French and shortly thereafter in English via an 1801 poem titled “*La Gastronomie, ou l'homme des champs à table*.¹⁰ From this point, the “art

and science of delicate eating” developed into a popular form of print culture in Europe whose epicenter was Paris.¹¹ In post-Revolutionary Paris, professional writers advanced gastronomy as both a set of social habits and an aesthetic sensibility whose aims were not only to appreciate and advance *haute cuisine* (or “high” food culture) but also to reflect on the character of consumer culture and public space in liberal democracies like France.

Gastronomy coalesced in nineteenth-century Paris around a relatively small group of aristocratic and upper middle-class men who styled themselves as arbiters of good taste, imagining that category as paradoxically exclusive and accessible. Creator of the serial publication known as the *Almanach des gourmands*, Alexandre Balthazar Laurent Grimod de la Reynière (hereafter, Grimod) played an especially influential role in making gastronomy a popular literary form and is attributed with inventing the modern restaurant review.¹² In early issues of the *Almanach* published between 1803 and 1806, Grimod’s invented persona of “the Gourmand” relays leisurely walks through Paris during which he seeks, tastes, and evaluates a seasonally shifting bounty of food.¹³ Writing some two centuries later about the Los Angeles food scene, Pulitzer Prize-winning restaurant critic Jonathan Gold likewise links his persona of the literary gourmet to experiences of urban mobility – as in his yearlong “adventure” of endeavoring to try every eatery along LA’s fifteen-mile-long Pico Boulevard.¹⁴

For Grimod, post-Revolutionary Paris is a city where “l’art alimentaire” finds its ideal expression in bourgeois homes and restaurants that cater to the Gourmand and “[sa] perspicacité de l’organe du goût” (his insights [of the plate] as the organ of taste).¹⁵ For Gold, twenty-first-century LA is “a city where a great meal is as likely to come from Koreatown or the three-million-strong Mexican community as it is from Beverly Hills.”¹⁶ Despite his differences from a writer like Grimod in these views of urban food culture, Gold shares with predecessors a sense that the professional food writer garners cultural authority thru culinary connoisseurship – or what Grimod terms “savoir-vivre” (knowing how to live).¹⁷ As Gold writes in his collection of reviews titled *Counter Intelligence*, “Each of the restaurants in this book was visited anonymously and repeatedly, and each of them serves at least one dish that is the best of its kind in the city.”¹⁸ This statement on the methodical process that Gold follows chimes with the portrayal of Grimod’s “Jury,” which the French writer characterizes in the *Almanach* as a body of experts who test the dishes and delicacies sent to him for written “légitimations” (or reviews).¹⁹ Put differently, the cultural status of gastronomic authors inheres at once in the ephemeral pleasure they re-create for readers and in the rigor they embody through turning transient acts of eating into lasting literary works.

As the examples of Grimod and Gold suggest, gastronomical discourse vacillates between emphasizing cultural refinement and encouraging in-the-moment pleasure. A contemporary of Grimod, Jean Anthelm Brillat-Savarin, thus reasons in *The Physiology of Taste* that the human senses have promoted physical nourishment while also giving rise to the arts, among which he includes gastronomy itself.²⁰ In contrast to Grimod, however, Brillat-Savarin hoped to develop a scientific approach to cultural and culinary taste, musing that advances in chemistry could afford insights into the material processes that produce flavors and other sensory experiences.²¹ Revealing his own social biases, Brillat-Savarin also viewed taste as a “reflective sensation” that only finds full expression when educated consumers “mak[e] an intellectual judgment based on the impressions that have been transmitted” from the mouth to the mind.²² As this formulation shows, the gastronomic tradition has often been complicit with social prejudices related to class and ethnicity. In *Taste*, eighteenth-century literature scholar Denise Gigante offers a comprehensive study of how culinary discourse and the class politics of French and British gastronomy shaped ideas of taste and artistic appreciation in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.²³ Focused on this context, she argues that “food has never been far from the concept of mental discrimination,” even as taste has been “an apt metaphor for a kind of pleasure that does not submit to objective laws.”²⁴ Building on this two-part argument, we can see in gastronomical writing a tension between enforcing social hierarchies and licensing pleasures of the body. From the anecdotes of procuring delicious foods while walking around Paris in Grimod’s *Almanach* to meditations on cultural diversity in Gold’s reviews of Los Angeles restaurants and food trucks, gastronomical authors have long suggested that writing for a living about restaurants, chefs, bakers, cheesemakers, fishmongers, butchers, and other purveyors of edible goods transcends the boundaries of “food criticism.” Surveying a city’s culinary landscapes, these authors instead have imagined themselves to be cosmopolitan urban observers who walk a city so as to know it and who, in turn, promise readers more than reviews and ratings. In short, they promise sensorial and sociological maps of places, which make cuisine a window onto matters of class, consumerism, labor, leisure, and human–nonhuman entanglements; and they employ literary tools to re-imagine these places through the lens of cuisine.²⁵

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Modernist studies scholar Luke Bouvier identifies nineteenth-century French gastronomy with a broader discourse of urban modernity that influenced literary modernism in the early twentieth century.²⁶ Such correlations among

gastronomy and literary modernism finds expression in Virginia Woolf's novels *To the Lighthouse* (1927) and *Between the Acts* (1939).²⁷ Exemplary of the stream of consciousness techniques associated with high modernist fiction, Woolf's novels probe how gustatory taste reciprocally shapes artistic innovation. About *To the Lighthouse*, critic Bettina Knapp elaborates on this analysis by stressing a conflict between a lengthy and non-linear scene of eating in the novel and Woolf's lived experiences of depression: "Is it an irony that one of the most important sequences in ... *To the Lighthouse* should focus on food when the author herself frequently had to be coaxed to eat? Not really, since Woolf was not dealing with ordinary beef, vegetables, and fruits, but these ingredients as depicted in the impressionists."²⁸ This interpretation resonates with how Novero defines "antidiets of the avant-garde": a concept that delineates early twentieth-century writers and artists who craft out of their stylistic and rhetorical methods a "deconstruction of ... gastronomy" for which bodily provocation, discomfort, and disgust are central.²⁹ Writing about Fluxus artists who were active in the 1960s and 1970s, Novero observes that "the grammatical subversion of gastronomy" in this and other avant-garde movements often "occurred through the disorderly in(di)gestion of loose ingredients, for example, through a gastronomically arbitrary approach to the set language of food."³⁰ In other words, one defining feature of experimental writing and art in the twentieth century was a skeptical and critical relationship to bourgeois food discourses and culinary cultures. We see this at work in a wide range of writers and artists – from Marinetti, Proust, and Woolf to, as Novero elaborates, leftist public intellectual Walter Benjamin and Swiss Fluxus artist Daniel Spoerri (of "Eat Art"). In terms of well-known modernist literary authors, we could also add to this list novelists such as Charles Baudelaire, Zora Neale Hurston, Gertrude Stein, Jean Toomer, Ernest Hemingway, and James Joyce.

In novels such as *To the Lighthouse*, this counter-gastronomy discourse draws into relief the social histories not only of particular cuisines but also of professional expertise writ large and its status in capitalist societies. Across cultural contexts, food labor has been both feminized and racialized when it occurs within households or is otherwise devalued. Two leading food studies scholars – Kyla Tompkins in *Racial Indigestion* and Amy Bentley in *Eating for Victory* – trace this pattern through US discourses of eating in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, while sociologists Alison Alkon and Kari Norgaard address it in their study of contemporary food justice activism on the part of indigenous communities in the Pacific Northwest.³¹ The inequities and injustices that link these distinct cases of European gastronomy, US dietary rhetoric, and indigenous food justice movements are at

once sociocultural and rhetorical – freighted with long histories and ongoing experiences of domesticity, empire, slavery, and migrant work.

When taking up what Tompkins terms “eating cultures,” some modernist writers explore the inequities embedded in gastronomy as both a literary tradition and cultural field. The early twentieth century was a period marked by two world wars, xenophobia, and the Holocaust. In terms of food systems specifically, the period between the 1910s and 1940s temporarily opened up opportunities for some women to enter the workforce as part of national efforts to propel industrial and agricultural productivity as millions of men went to war. After each world war, however, clerical and manual labor was devalued in response to the wartime influx of women workers, while government propaganda, in the United States for example, depicted women as patriots who shopped, prepared, and conserved food for their families.³² Satires of these relationships between war, labor, consumerism, and domesticity preoccupy modernist writers like Niedecker and Fisher – who link the modern war machine to what English novelist and essayist George Orwell describes as a “luxury feeding” class.³³ Of course, not all modernist writers and artists can be so characterized. Hemingway as well as Stein and her partner Alice B. Toklas exemplify a coterie of expatriate American writers who lived in Paris in the early twentieth century and became enamored of French gastronomy. Keyser offers a detailed account of how these high modernists embraced both *haute cuisine* and *terroir* (as in the perceived richness of France with respect to agriculture, food, and culture).³⁴

A comparison of *The Futurist Cookbook* and Niedecker’s *New Goose* poems builds on this account of how French gastronomy has interacted with modernism by revealing a spectrum of responses to gastronomy on the part of avant-garde artists and writers. For its part, *The Futurist Cookbook* lambasts Italian culinary traditions like pasta, which Marinetti and his collaborators decry for making Italian bodies “leaden” and “opaque.”³⁵ To address this chauvinistic anxiety, the cookbook proffers prescriptions for “a new way of thinking, which everyone considers crazy, but which will henceforth establish the proper nourishment for a faster and even more airborne life” (73). This take on cuisine and consumption can be read as code for the Futurists’ investment in fascism – evident in their nationalistic vision of strong Italian bodies powered by steel and other industrial technologies. As for the book’s form, *The Futurist Cookbook* is a miscellany of polemical musings, weird recipes, and collaged sketches of spectacles held at a Futurist test kitchen in Turin, Italy called The Holy Palate. Taken together, these elements of the cookbook cohere around a project of sparking

a cultural “*risorgimento*” (or revival) to supplant the nineteenth-century political movement known as Italian Romanticism (65).

The recipes presented in the cookbook – called “formulas” – show that this Futurist revival flouts regional foodways in Italy and throughout the Mediterranean as well as received gastronomic ideas of what eating well means. As examples, the book’s formulas include “Steel Chicken,” “A Spark,” “Network in the Sky,” “Atlantic Aerofood,” and “Italian Sea” – the last of which calls for “geometric stripes of fresh tomato sauce and liquidized spinach” to be arranged on a “rectangular plate” with skyscraper-like “constructions” of boiled fish, banana, cherry, and dried fig (143, 151, 154, 158, 165). Such hard-to-follow instructions for preparing and consuming unusual and possibly inedible dishes unravels the genre of the recipe, which, as Tompkins explains, has circulated historically as an instrument of practical knowledge, shared authorship, and intergenerational community.³⁶ Jettisoning the recipe’s social functions, the Futurist formulas exemplify, instead, what Novero terms “antidiets.”³⁷ They also anticipate twenty-first-century culinary experiments associated with celebrity chefs such as Ferran Adrià of Spain. Known variously as molecular gastronomy and modernist cuisine, this contemporary futurism adapts the biochemistry equipment and synthetic goods of industrial food science (vacuum sealers and agar-agar, for instance) to the space of high-end restaurant kitchens. By comparison, *The Futurist Cookbook* deploys the tropes of experimental technique and the tools of industrial engineering to foster not novel gastronomic experiences primarily but rather to advocate for extreme nationalism. Collected in the section titled “futurist formulas for restaurants and quisitive” [sic],³⁸ the recipes knit Futurism to a pseudoscientific and “hygienic” vocabulary of cooking that invokes racist eugenics, as Enrico Cesaretti argues.³⁹ In step with the 1909 Futurist manifesto published in *Le Figaro*, *The Futurist Cookbook* simultaneously promotes new technologies and regressive politics. Ultimately, the book’s formulas advocate for re-engineering Italian cuisine around the fusion of edible ingredients and industrial materials in order to jettison cosmopolitan cultures in favor of white, steel-powered nationalism.

Niedecker’s *New Goose* poems, composed primarily in the 1930s and 1940s and aligned with a modernist poetry school known as Objectivism, do not explicitly take up *The Futurist Cookbook*, but they do provide a provocative comparison. Set in the upper Midwest of the United States, the short and often satirical lyrics confront the male-centered and bourgeois history of French gastronomy as well as the macho nationalism of avant-garde cultural movements like Futurism. They do so via poetic speakers who articulate experiences of regional and rural life: ranging from the challenges

of cultivating and earning a living from crops such as wheat and asparagus to the persistence of poverty in agricultural regions. This ethos emerges in the volume's interconnected images: images of farmers going hungry even as their labor ironically produces food during the Great Depression and World War II alongside images of wealthy urban consumers dining on French butter and other expensive edible goods. The violence of war and poverty constitute the backdrop for the volume's conception of gastronomic food culture. "To war they kept / us going," opens one poem about the Spanish Civil War (dated as 1936–39); while another poem invokes the bomb shelters in London during World War II.⁴⁰ Against such military histories, the lyrics of *New Goose* take shape as war poems that dwell on wartime realities of hunger in Midwestern agricultural communities – especially as they affect rural women who find the shelves of their local grocers bare as a result of rationing.⁴¹ One poem, to this point, describes "destitute" rural towns where everyday life is one of "[n]othing nourishing" (55). Such images permeate the volume, disturbing the rhetoric of national identity and shared sacrifice that US rationing propaganda rationing propaganda, along with other types of war propaganda, promoted in the 1940s.⁴²

A complex satire of nationalism and consumerism thus takes shape across the poems of *New Goose*. This satire comes into sharp focus when one of Niedecker's speakers assails the "government men" charged with increasing food yields in places like the Wisconsin region where the poet lived and, for a period of time, worked as a copyeditor for a regional farming publication called *Hoard's Dairyman*. While the government workers tell farmers, "Don't plant wheat, / we've got too much," the poem's speaker protests the irony of systemic hunger in her agricultural community. A poignant poem of outrage, the lyric depicts the nationalist fervor for industrialized agriculture that emerged in the United States during the early twentieth century as oxymoronic in inspiring the production of food surpluses without ameliorating poverty conditions. The premise of food rationing – stockpiling for "way off" battlefields – comes under scrutiny in another poem as a "quack" idea that divides affluent communities from those who are "too hungry to flatter" (118–19). Through these poems, Niedecker thus employs modernist poetics to give voice to rural hunger while also debunking propagandistic images of nations unified through rationing, on the one hand, and consumerism, on the other.

One imagines that the rhetoric of collective sacrifice that supported national rationing programs during World War II would have inhibited conspicuous displays of consumption. However, throughout the war, upper-class consumers patronized gourmet restaurants in cities such as New York and London. In this context, the gastronomical voice of M. F. K. Fisher

emerged. Author of both cookbooks and travel memoirs, Fisher juxtaposes the creeds of gastronomy with observations of scarcity and violence specific to the period. Thus, although Fisher draws on Brillat-Savarin's philosophy of taste (a text she translated into English), her concern with inequity in the food system resonates equally well with Niedecker's poetry. The double status of eating in Fisher's writings as an escape for the wealthy and a material marker of both war and poverty for others is especially salient in Fisher's 1942 work *How to Cook a Wolf*. This unconventional cookbook, on first glance, aims to inspire culinary innovation in American kitchens during World War II.⁴³ Few cookbooks were published during the war; but those that were typically targeted white middle-class housewives with thrifty meal plans based on the emerging science of vitamins.⁴⁴ In contrast, *How to Cook a Wolf* intersperses recipes that are far-fetched and whimsical with poignant musings on the material restrictions that many households faced.⁴⁵

Max Rudin describes the book as a work of "culinary modernism," but it is perhaps better described as an intervention in both French gastronomy and high modernism.⁴⁶ Fisher combines modernist forms – nonlinear narrative, montage, and irony, for example – with journalistic commentary on middle-class and upper-class consumption patterns. In doing so, *How to Cook a Wolf* jettisons fragmentary representations of history that permeate high modernist texts (including the fiction of Woolf and Hemingway) and instead details quotidian experiences of food rationing and middle-class eating. Against her personal appreciation for "lavish" French cuisine, Fisher's arguably literary cookbook investigates a fissure between overconsumption in the United States (particularly in affluent homes) and global food shortages. To this point, *How to Cook a Wolf* is not a chronicle of "half-forgotten luxuries and half-remembered delicate impossible dishes," she writes, but a sharp exposé of consumer culture and its inequalities (191). If soldiers, prisoners of war, and occupied populations survived on emergency rations, Fisher reasons that war famine perversely benefits the US food economy, which not only exported grain surpluses in this period but also created brand-name products developed expressly to feed the hungry. One of the longest sections in the book – "How to Carve the Wolf" – accordingly laments that Americans continued to consume large quantities of meat during the war despite rationing programs. Fisher suggests that this habit bordered on an obsession, an obsession that the relatively minimal meat restrictions overseen by the US Office of Price Administration during World War II highlights.

In step with Fisher's other food writing of the time, *How to Cook a Wolf* thus demonstrates that evidently innocuous food prescriptions – to share alike and to eat a balanced diet, for example – at once conceal and exacerbate the unequal structures of modern food systems. Against US campaigns for

food conservation, food aid, and “unadulterated” national cooking, Fisher parodies the wartime appetites of affluent gourmands. Her 1942 cookbook thus joins *New Goose* and *The Futurist Cookbook* as an important text for the subject of gastronomy and modernism. The rhetorical and political purposes to which Fisher puts modernist techniques in the cookbook are more provocative than her writing style *per se*. Both *How to Cook a Wolf* and Fisher’s 1943 memoir *The Gastronomical Me* adapt literary modernism to apprehend the entwined relationships of cuisine and famine. These books take inspiration from the modernist form of fragmented narrative and collage, yet ultimately do so to discover in individual acts and modes of eating the American nation’s growing appetite for power.

Niedecker and Fisher are in dialogue with other writers whom this chapter has cited, such as Woolf, Stein, and Orwell. These modernists draw their readers’ attention to the brutalities of nationalism and warfare, on the one hand, and the insularity of white upper-class citizens in Europe and the United States, on the other. Satires of gastronomic literature – with its appeals to both “luxury feeding” (in Orwell’s words) and urban cosmopolitanism – provided a particularly concrete means for this broader modernist critique of war, nation, and consumer culture. At the same time, the language of gourmet cuisine and fine dining pervade texts like *New Goose* and *How to Cook a Wolf* – as with the “FOOD” section of Stein’s 1914 poetic work *Tender Buttons* and the narratives of restaurant labor in Orwell’s 1933 memoir *Down and Out in Paris and London*.⁴⁷ This tension between counter-gastronomy and gourmandize suffuses *The Futurist Cookbook* as well, but to the radically different effect of re-making the restaurant – a nexus for the cultural fusions that city-centered gastronomic authors tend to celebrate – into a space for white nationalism. In this sense, the manifold interactions of gastronomy and modernism (the latter defined to encompass distinct avant-garde movements such as Futurism and Objectivism) are at once steeped in the violent histories of the early twentieth century and relevant to the complex politics of food and nation in the contemporary period.

Notes

1. Key studies of literary modernism and food culture include to date: Allison Carruth, *Global Appetites: American Power and the Literature of Food* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013); J. Michelle Coghlan, “Tasting Modernism: An Introduction,” *Resilience: A Journal of the Environmental Humanities* 2.1 (2014); Michel Delville, *Food, Poetry, and the Aesthetics of Consumption: Eating the Avant-Garde* (New York: Routledge, 2008); Jennifer L. Fleissner, “Henry James’s Art of Eating,” *English Literary History* 75.1 (2008) 27–62; Catherine Keyser, “Bottles, Bubbles, and Blood: Jean Toomer and the

- Limits of Racial Epidermalism,” *Modernism/modernity* 22.2 (2015) 279–302; “Candy Boys and Chocolate Factories: Roald Dahl, Racialization, and Global Industry,” *MFS – Modern Fiction Studies* 63.3 (2017) 403–28.
2. F. T. Marinetti, *The Futurist Cookbook*, trans. Suzanne Brill (San Francisco, CA: Bedford Arts, 1989); Lorine Niedecker, *New Goose*, ed. Jenny Penberthy (Berkeley, CA: Rumor Books, 2002); M. F. K. Fisher, *Consider the Oyster* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1941; repr., 1988); *How to Cook a Wolf* (New York: World Publishing, 1942; repr., New York: North Point Press, 1988); *The Gastronomical Me* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1943; York: North Point Press, 1989).
 3. Cecilia Novero, *Antidiets of the Avant Garde: From Futurist Cooking to Eat Art* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).
 4. Fisher, *How to Cook a Wolf*, 32.
 5. Quoted in Jennifer Cognard-Black and Melissa A. Goldthwaite, eds., *Books That Cook: The Making of a Literary Meal* (New York: New York University Press, 2014), 29.
 6. Quoted in ibid., 32.
 7. John W. S. Gouley, *Dining and Its Amenities* (New York: Rebman Company, 1907).
 8. Yong Chen, *Chop Suey, USA: The Story of Chinese Food in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 157; see also Isaac Yue and Siufu Tang, eds., *Scribes of Gastronomy: Representations of Food and Drink in Imperial Chinese Literature* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2013).
 9. Frederick W. Mote, “Yüan and Ming,” in *Food and Chinese Culture: Anthropological and Historical Perspectives*, ed. K.C. Chang (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1977), 245.
 10. Jennifer J. Davis, *Defining Culinary Authority: The Transformation of Cooking in France, 1650–1830* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2013), 112; Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson, *Accounting for Taste: The Triumph of French Cuisine* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 82; Rebecca L. Spang, *The Invention of the Restaurant: Paris and Modern Gastronomic Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 140.
 11. “Dining, Considered as a Fine Art (1858),” in *Gusto: Essential Writings in Nineteenth-Century Gastronomy*, ed. Denise Gigante (New York: Routledge, 2005), 243.
 12. Spang, *The Invention of the Restaurant*, 152.
 13. Ibid., 154.
 14. Jonathan Gold, *Counter Intelligence: Where to Eat in the Real Los Angeles* (New York: An LA Weekly Book for St. Martin’s Press, 2000), Kindle e-book.
 15. Alexandre Balthazar Laurent Grimod de la Reynière, “Almanach Des Gourmands, Servant De Guide Dans Les Moyens De Faire Excellente Chère, Par Un Vieil Amateur, Sixième Année [1808],” in *Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département littérature et art* (Paris: Maradan: Bibliothèque nationale de France, 1808), 130.
 16. Gold, *Counter Intelligence: Where to Eat in the Real Los Angeles*, vi.
 17. Alexandre Balthazar Laurent Grimod de la Reynière, “From the Gourmand’s Almanac (1803–12),” in *Gusto: Essential Writings in Nineteenth-Century Gastronomy*, ed. Denise Gigante (New York: Routledge, 2005), 29.

18. Gold, *Counter Intelligence: Where to Eat in the Real Los Angeles*, vii.
19. Alexandre Balthazar Laurent Grimod de la Reynière, “Almanach Des Gourmands, Servant De Guide Dans Les Moyens De Faire Excellente Chère, Par Un Vieil Amateur, Quatrième Année [1806],” in *Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département littérature et art* (Paris: Maradan: Bibliothèque nationale de France, 1806), xviii. Note, the *légitimations* replaced Grimod’s walking tours, but there is ambiguity around whether the Jury was a real body or an invention. Spang, *The Invention of the Restaurant*, 166.
20. Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, *The Physiology of Taste: Or, Meditations on Transcendental Gastronomy*, trans. M. F. K. Fisher (New York: Counterpoint, 1949), 35.
21. Ibid., 38.
22. Ibid., 41.
23. Denise Gigante, *Taste: A Literary History* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 2005).
24. Ibid., 2.
25. Gold, *Counter Intelligence: Where to Eat in the Real Los Angeles*, vi.
26. Luke Bouvier, “A Taste for Words: Gastronomy and the Writing of Loss in Brillat-Savarin’s *Physiologie Du Goût*,” *Mosaic* 38, no. 3 (2005), 95–6.
27. Virginia Woolf, *Between the Acts* (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1939, 1941); *To the Lighthouse* (London: Everyman’s Library, 1992).
28. Bettina L. Knapp, “Virginia Woolf’s ‘Boeuf En Daube’,” in *Literary Gastronomy*, ed. David Bevan (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1988), 29.
29. Novero, *Antidiets of the Avant Garde: From Futurist Cooking to Eat Art*, x.
30. Ibid., 241.
31. Alison Hope Alkon and Kari Marie Norgaard, “Breaking the Food Chains: An Investigation of Food Justice Activism,” *Sociological Inquiry* 79.3 (2009) 289–305; Amy Bentley, *Eating for Victory: Food Rationing and the Politics of Domesticity* (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1998); Kyla Wazana Tompkins, *Racial Indigestion: Eating Bodies in the 19th Century* (New York: New York University Press, 2012).
32. Amy Bentley, *Eating for Victory: Food Rationing and the Politics of Domesticity*; John Burnett, *England Eats Out: A Social History of Eating Out in England from 1830 to the Present* (London: Pearson Longman, 2004); Elmer Davis, “Food Rationing and the War: A Radio Address” (Washington, D.C.: United States Office of War Information, 1942); Harvey A. Levenstein, *Paradox of Plenty: A Social History of Eating in Modern America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); Barbara McLean Ward, ed. *Produce and Conserve, Share and Play Square: The Grocer and the Consumer on the Home-Front Battlefield During World War II*, Strawberry Banke Museum (London: University Press of New England, 1994); Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska, *Austerity in Britain: Rationing, Controls, and Consumption, 1939–1955* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).
33. George Orwell, “The British Crisis: London Letter to *Partisan Review* [8 May 1942],” in *My Country Right or Left, 1940–1943*, ed. Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus (Boston, MA: Nonpareil Books, 2000), 208.
34. Catherine Keyser, “An All-Too-Moveable Feast: Ernest Hemingway and the Stakes of Terroir,” *Resilience: A Journal of the Environmental Humanities* 2.1 (2014), 12.

35. Marinetti, *The Futurist Cookbook*, 36., hereafter cited in text.
36. See Kyla Wazana Tompkins, “Consider the Recipe,” *J19: The Journal of Nineteenth-Century Americanists* 1.2 (2013), 440.
37. Novero, *Antidiets of the Avant Garde: From Futurist Cooking to Eat Art*.
38. “quisibeve” [or *qui si beve*] translates as here one/you drink and represents Marinetti’s term for bars as a rejection of the use of French and other foreign terminology in Italian culture.
39. Enrico Cesaretti, “Recipes for the Future: Traces of Past Utopias in *the Futurist Cookbook*,” *The European Legacy* 14.7 (2009), 851.
40. Lorine Niedecker, *Lorine Niedecker: Collected Works*, ed. Jenny Penberthy (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002), 89, 92; see also Rachel Blau DuPlessis, “Lorine Niedecker’s ‘Paean to Place’ and Its Fusion Poetics,” *Contemporary Literature* 46.3 (2005), 393–421; Ruth Jennison, “Scrambling Narrative: Niedecker and the White Dome of Logic,” *JNT: Journal of Narrative Theory* 41.1 (2011), 53–81; Peter Middleton, “Folk Poetry and the American Avant-Garde: Placing Lorine Niedecker,” *Journal of American Studies* 31.2 (1997), 203–18; Marjorie Perloff, “Canon and Loaded Gun: Feminist Poetics and the Avant-Garde,” in *Poetic License: Essays on Modernist and Postmodernist Lyric* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1990), 31–51.
41. Niedecker, *Lorine Niedecker: Collected Works*, 57, hereafter cited in text.
42. For an extended analysis of this point see A. Carruth, “War Rations and the Food Politics of Late Modernism,” *Modernism – Modernity* 16.4 (2009), 767–95.
43. Fisher, *How to Cook a Wolf*, ix. Page references are to the 1988 reprint; hereafter cited in text as HW.
44. Examples include cookbooks such as *250 Ways to Save Sugar*. See also: Burnett, *England Eats Out*; Bentley, *Eating for Victory*; Michael Pollan, *In Defense of Food: An Eater’s Manifesto* (New York: Penguin, 2008), 47.
45. In the United States, wartime cookbooks offered recipes to comply with rationing and with the government’s new “Basic Seven” chart, the precursor to the Food Pyramid. Bentley, *Eating for Victory*, 69; Levenstein, *Paradox of Plenty*, 66–67; McLean Ward, *Produce and Conserve*.
46. Max Rudin, “M. F. K. Fisher and the Consolations of Food,” *Raritan* 21.2 (2002), 131; see also Susan Derwin, “The Poetics of M. F. K. Fisher,” *Style* 37.3 (2003), 266–78; David Lazar, “The Usable Past of M. F.K. Fisher,” *Southwest Review* 77.4 (1992), 515–31.
47. Gertrude Stein, *Tender Buttons: The Corrected Centennial Edition* (San Francisco, CA: City Lights Books, 2014); George Orwell, *Down and Out in Paris and London* (New York: Harcourt, Inc., 1933).

7

J. MICHELLE COGLAN

Cold War Cooking

Perhaps the hottest kitchen of the Cold War was housed in the typical American house on display at the 1959 American National Exhibition in Moscow, scene of the famous domestic showdown – quickly dubbed “The Kitchen Debate” – between Soviet First Secretary Nikita Krushchev and US Vice President Richard Nixon. Yet as much recent scholarship has shown, the postwar American kitchen – tricked out with Tupperware and modern labor-saving devices – had by then already become a central front in the war on Communism. For as architectural historian Beatriz Colomina points out in her preface to the groundbreaking 2004 collection, *Cold War, Hothouses*: “The [postwar US] housewife became a soldier on the home front; the kitchen her command post where she not only controlled the domain of her living space, but was purported to defend the nation. The suburban house, equipped with every imaginable appliance, projected the image of the ‘Good Life,’ of the lifestyle of prosperity and excess that was the main weapon in the Cold War.”¹ Simply put, stylish appliances and the spaces that housed them came to be seen as a key site of American soft power both at home and abroad, with domestic space and postwar domesticity retooled and redeployed as Cold War weapons that were, in turn, exported to Marshall Plan Europe as an antidote to the Soviet bloc.² Architectural historian Greg Castillo and historians of technology Ruth Oldenziel and Karin Zachmann have similarly drawn attention to the ways that the kitchen, in particular, was used to “constitute, embody, and enact” Cold War politics,³ becoming the visual locus of Marshall Plan-sponsored mass-consumption efforts in Europe – or, the heart of what Oldenziel and Zachmann aptly term the US’s campaign of “cold war seduction.”⁴ As Castillo explains, “The Marshall Plan set out to link capitalist democracy and economic growth to low-cost mass consumption: the Fordist mechanism by which workers would be enfranchised, and agitation by communist labor unions neutralized.”⁵ And in ongoing model home exhibitions, trade fairs, and magazine advertisements across the continent, futuristic American push-button kitchens with ultra-modern domestic conveniences

were repeatedly showcased to win postwar European consumers over to what was then termed the “American Way of Life.”⁶ In light of such propaganda efforts, poet Louis Aragon dubbed the US a “civilization of bathtubs and Frigidaires,” while more outspoken French critics christened Marshall Plan progress “Coca-colonisation.”⁷

But while scholars have increasingly recognized the way the Cold War reshaped US kitchen design and, in so doing, fueled domestic politics at home and abroad, Cold War cooking – and even more precisely, Cold War-era American food writing – has so far garnered far less attention. Indeed, despite work by literary scholar Allison Carruth to recover the ways that wartime food writing by M. F. K. Fisher and others might be read as both “artifacts of late modernism and as historical interventions in the transatlantic power of food during the Second World War,”⁸ the transnational dimensions of postwar American food writing remain largely unexplored, not least because recent studies of American food culture in that period have most often read postwar American kitchen culture in light of gender politics rather than in tandem with the Marshall Plan’s role in promoting the American domestic scene – both in the sense of images of smiling housewives showing off gleaming kitchen counters and the importation of American staples like Coca-Cola – on the Cold War kitchen front.⁹

Few figures had a larger impact on mid-twentieth century US kitchen culture than did Julia Child. As a number of recent commentators have suggested, the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) researcher, food writer, TV celebrity, and domestic goddess near single-handedly “re-outfitted the American kitchen and re-educated the American palate”¹⁰ – or, as food blogger Julie Powell writes in the opening manifesto of her spectacularly popular (if equally maligned) 2002 *Julie/Julia* Project blog: “Julia Child taught America to cook, *and* to eat.”¹¹ In the heyday of Jello molds and frozen foods, Child made French cooking hot by way of both *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* (1961), the phenomenally best-selling cookbook which she co-authored with Simone Beck and Louise Bertholle, and her popular, long-running cooking show, *The French Chef*, which debuted on Boston’s public television channel WGBH in 1963. In turn, her Cambridge, MA kitchen became such a cultural icon, or rather, domestic treasure, that it now resides at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. Yet as John E. Finn has suggested, although there are many accounts of her life, biographers – and here I think we should also add critics – have not yet offered a “sustained and reflective account of Julia’s contributions to American food culture.”¹² Take, for example, the fact that both popular and scholarly accounts of Child’s life rarely make much of her astonishing proximity to

America's campaign of Cold War seduction, noting only in passing, if at all, that she first encountered future co-author Beck at a reception for a Marshall Plan executive.¹³ Child's 2006 memoir, *My Life in France*, by contrast, reveals a keen awareness of both the postwar domestic scene and the stakes of being an American in Paris in the age of "Marshallization." It also offers a candid description of her husband's role in the propaganda war then being waged in Europe: "Paul's job at USIS was to 'inform the French people by graphic means about the aspects of American life that the [US] government deems important.'"¹⁴ In this chapter, I read *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* alongside *My Life in France* and Child's recently collected letters from Paris to recover the crucially transnational context of her intervention in American taste, and to uncover how her work to translate French cooking for an American audience dished up a pivotal upending of US Cold War kitchen ideology, countering Marshall Plan narratives of modernization, Americanization, and postwar prosperity at home and abroad with alternate visions of French leisure, luxury, and culinary extravagance in both the gustatory and the temporal sense.

Tasting Postwar Paris

Nora Ephron's popular 2009 film *Julie & Julia* opens with Julia and Paul Child's arrival in France in November 1948.¹⁵ In the scene, we watch as their sky-blue Buick is lowered slowly onto the gangway at Le Havre, and glimpse idyllic countryside as they make their way to Rouen and Julia's celebrated first taste of French cooking. Their now famous lunch, a simple Dover sole cooked to perfection and served with a browned butter sauce, was – as Child herself describes it in *My Life in France* – "the most exciting meal of [her] life."¹⁶ This glorious lunch is a fitting entry to the film's one hundred and twenty-three minute homage to the art of eating, for that first taste of France, by Child's own account, textures her experience of Paris, eventually igniting her impulse to attend cooking school and open her own. It is fitting, too, because in this scene France, by way of Julia by way of Julie by way of Nora, is rendered here as everything we imagined it to be (or taste like). In part because of the culinary perfection of this opening sequence, the *New York Times* described *Julie & Julia* as a "film where what the actors eat is as important as the actors themselves," noting that Ephron tested nearly every recipe that appears on screen, and that under her direction food stylist Susan Spungen labored to make the shots of the *sole meunière* every bit as delectable for the audience as it once had been for Child.¹⁷ But this culinary scene significantly functions as a kind of screen memory, as well, obscuring in one lush swoop that when Julia first arrived in France, the country was scarred by

war and still reeling from deprivation – was, in other words, far from a foodie paradise. As French writer Alphonse Boudard described the postwar scene on the eve of Julia’s arrival: “And then always, now, for six years, these eternal questions of food . . . the ration cards, the meat, the milk, the cooking fat missing from the frying pan of a France, liberated, but with an empty stomach.”¹⁸

But where Ephron’s nostalgic return to Julia’s France blithely glosses over its grim postwar situation, Child herself remained acutely attentive to it. In her memoir, she notes, for example, that her first glimpse of Le Havre from the porthole of the *America* included sights of “giant cranes, piles of brick, bombed-out empty spaces, and rusting half-sunk hulks left over from the war”;¹⁹ the drive through the “quintessentially French” Norman countryside exposed her both to “sights and sounds and smells . . . [that] were so much more particular and interesting than a movie montage or a magazine spread about ‘France’” and to little towns “still scarred by gaping bomb holes and knots of barbed wire.”²⁰ The Paris that emerges in her memoir is thus one marked by ecstatic descriptions of glorious markets and smiling fish sellers, but equally so by rubble-strewn lots and plaques marking the memory of those who were, as she notes, “killed at this spot in defense of [their] country”²¹ – and such “somber reminders” of the war were dotted everywhere across the city.²² Cynthia Ozick notably chose this same terrain for *Foreign Bodies*, her artful 2010 reworking of Henry James’s fin-de-siècle American in Paris novel, *The Ambassadors*, reminding us that in Paris in the early 1950s “the fumes of the death camps were still in the air”;²³ or, as one reviewer of her novel put it in *Book Forum*: “Behold the shattered city.”²⁴

Yet if the France that Child fell in love with was marked by physical reminders of the recent devastation that we might now be tempted to forget, it was no less so by the scars of wartime deprivation and the pressingly day-to-day nature of continuing postwar scarcity that followed on its heels: As historian Rebecca J. Pulju points out, wartime food rationing lasted until 1949 in France, and food prices continued to surge into the 1960s.²⁵ Such ongoing shortages and inflation shadowed Child’s experience of eating in the city, overhanging her shopping and her dining out in Paris, even as rolling blackouts would “forc[e] Chef Bugnard to be creative with our classtime” during her lessons at Le Cordon Bleu.²⁶ This other taste of Paris – or, more precisely, the other side of this foodie paradise – marks nearly every aspect of her daily life in France, flavoring her memories of picking up her “ration books” along with her “commissary tickets and travel vouchers” during her first week in Paris and prompting reminders that “Paris was still recovering from the war, and coffee rations ran out quickly, cosmetics were expensive, and decent olive oil was as precious as a gem.”²⁷ But it is strikingly registered,

too, in her experience of dining out in Paris, for in describing the delightful meals she enjoyed in the city she notes that some restaurants are so expensive that only Americans can afford to go to them,²⁸ and that others respond to the rationing and inflated food prices by acts of openly displayed – even near-theatrical – frugality. She writes, for example, of one proprietress, “known simply as Madame,” who glanced at each customer’s order, apportioning each diner’s food for the cook on the spot and, when sugar ran low, “trot[ted] upstairs to her apartment to fetch it in a brown cardboard box; then she’d measure just the right amount into a jar, with not a single grain wasted.”²⁹

In light of this, it is worth re-examining that luscious first taste of France that Child offers readers in her memoir and that Ephron later immortalized on screen. Certainly it was a magic meal, and one that seemed to initiate the already gastronomically adventurous Child into the peculiarly French bliss of exquisite eating *for its own sake*. It thus underscores the central dichotomy that Child most often drew between the French and American modes of life in the letters she exchanged with longtime friend and pen pal Avis DeVoto. On January 19, 1953 she writes, for example, “US and French life are so terribly different. The important thing here [in France] is that food is a great national sport, indulged by all classes. One’s best evenings are composed of a good dinner, and nothing else is necessary, and it takes the whole evening.”³⁰ But where we might then read Julia’s appreciation of French eating as simply a fantasy of limitless pleasure for its own sake, her taste of the postwar scene shaped her understanding of the precarity that underlay and constituted the joy of eating she so embraced and so identified with France in ways that Ephron’s film helps us forget. Put simply, the “sport” was not, she came to see, simply a product of the allure of endless bounty and limitless indulgence but rather the not-forgotten experience of scarcity and wartime deprivation. As she reflects in her memoir: “Hélène’s war story made me think about the French and their deep hunger – something that seemed to lurk beneath their love of food as an art form and their love of cooking as a ‘sport.’ I wondered if the nation’s gastronomical lust had its roots not in the sunshine of art but in the deep, dark deprivations France had suffered over the centuries.”³¹ Child’s dawning realization that France’s insatiable appetite signaled “lust” underwritten by “deep, dark deprivations” and the remembrance of longstanding lack thus reconfigures the double-edged “gastronomical lust” awakened in Rouen and her formulation of “La Belle France” – and with it, the luxury of French eating in *Mastering*. But it also crucially shaped the way that she came to question Marshall Plan modernization and, with it, the promise of, to return to Colomina’s formulation, “the lifestyle of prosperity and excess that was the main weapon in the Cold War.”

As Child herself reminds us, her life in France was directly intertwined with America's postwar relationship with Europe and the onset of the Cold War; indeed, she was uniquely positioned to watch this process first-hand. Her husband's visual-cultural work in France for the OSS and later for the USIA directly participated in the powerful propaganda war being waged in Europe to sell the American way of life, and put the Childs in closest proximity with the forces of modernization and Americanization in France. (At its founding in 1953, Eisenhower suggested that the United States Information Agency (USIA) was charged with nothing short of "persuad[ing] foreign peoples that it lies in their own interests to take actions which are also consistent with the national objectives of the United States."³²) While it bears remarking that Julia never questions Paul's work for the USIA, she does not shy away from poking fun at the men she and Paul dubbed "Marshall Plan hustlers" for pushing Fordist production schemes on the French.³³ In particular, she seems most to take issue with Marshall Plan consultants for altogether failing to value "the individualistic, artisanal quality of the French" even as she alludes to the comic mismatch between these opposing modes of life: "when Americans began making 'helpful' suggestions about how the French could 'increase productivity and profits,' the average Frenchman would shrug, as if to say, 'These notions of yours are all very fascinating, no doubt, but we have a nice little business here just as it is. Nobody has ulcers. I have time to work on my monograph about Balzac.'"³⁴

But even as Julia privately satirized the push to Americanize France forward into Fordist efficiency, and often underscored French resistance to these efforts, that process was taking place around her at breakneck speed.³⁵ French philosopher Henri Lefebvre, reflecting on the postwar moment in France, would describe "the almost cargo-cult-like, sudden descent of large appliances into war-torn French households and streets in the wake of the Marshall Plan. Before the war, it seemed, no one had a refrigerator; after the war, everyone did."³⁶ And Julia was all too aware that the France under whose spell she had so fallen was threatened by exactly this US-sponsored process of disruption and modernization. Reading Child's meticulous work to document the precise method and exquisite timing of French food in *Mastering* alongside her memoir and letters brings into relief the way that she saw her project as one not only of translating French cooking for an American audience, but also of revaluing and preserving precisely the way of life – and mode of cooking – that Marshall Plan modernization aimed forever to eradicate, an unhurried culinary culture that she privately feared – and Avis DeVoto similarly fretted – had already been done away with at home. As DeVoto puts it, in her letter to Julia dated February 23, 1953: "I know damn

well that this kind of cooking, this kind of eating, this kind of life is on its way out. But let's preserve what we can of it.”³⁷

The Archive and the Terroir

Child’s TV career has often been hailed for democratizing French cooking in the spirit of *Ratatouille*’s eponymous hero’s gleeful dictum “Anyone Can Cook.” But when *Mastering* first arrived on bookstore shelves in 1961 it seemed poised instead to reach only serious cooks who’d *already* been won over to the art of French cooking. While Alfred A. Knopf’s initial ad campaign hailed the volume’s ability to make French cooking accessible for American cooks – “You can now create authentic dishes in your own kitchen, with ingredients from the supermarket” – it nevertheless immediately went on to describe a far more delimited reader for whom that “you” was imagined to stand: “To discover how American women would respond to *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*, we tried it out on the kind we thought would appreciate it: the smart American housewife who enjoys the better things in life.”³⁸ This ideal reader, the ad suggested, was perfectly coiffed, regularly attended art galleries, and “often has a well-paid job”; but most of all, it insisted that the chic American woman it conjured already owns “a shelf-full of French cookbooks.”³⁹ Put another way, if Peg Bracken’s 1960 bestseller, *The I Hate To Cook Book*, unabashedly aimed to teach American women how to cook when they didn’t want to – and dared to say that more often than not they didn’t wish to – the 1961 Foreword to *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* famously claims the book is written for an altogether different sort of reader, most precisely for the “servantless American cook who can be unconcerned on occasion with budgets, waist-lines, time schedules, children’s meals, the parent-chauffer-den-mother syndrome, or anything else which might interfere with the enjoyment of producing something wonderful to eat.”⁴⁰ Unsurprisingly, Craig Claiborne, in his glowing review for *The New York Times*, thus described *Mastering* as “not a book for those with a superficial interest in food” but rather intended “for those who take a fundamental delight in the pleasures of cuisine.”⁴¹ But where Claiborne and Knopf’s marketing campaign assume that *Mastering*’s ideal reader must *already* be primed to enjoy such pleasures in order to appreciate this masterpiece, I would argue the book always already had another mission in mind: namely, unsettling its readers’ experience of time in the kitchen and, in so doing, seducing Americans with what Child terms the “fundamental delight” of French cooking.

Most immediately, *Mastering*’s Foreword compactly underscores its target audience as American in a double sense, as its turn to the “servantless cook”

echoes numerous letters exchanged between DeVoto and Child about another key difference between the French and American home, namely “the servant shortage.”⁴² But its opening also summons at once a vision of the hurried American kitchen and its antidote by way of the counter-configuration of the French cooking the reader aims herein to master. For the book asserts that it requires a reader who can indulge in the very things that an “American servantless cook” would seem to have little time for, and invokes a reader who can in fact indulge in the luxury of limitless time and culinary pleasure that is precisely figured as French in Julia’s memoir and letters from Paris – the kind of reader-cook that the book, in turn, aims paradoxically exactly to produce. Indeed, the Foreword’s gesture to the budgetary constraints, corporeal anxieties, and housewifely duties that might seem to preclude its readership can be read as a direct reply to the concerns about the harried American cook that DeVoto voiced to Child in a January 30, 1953 letter: “Nobody can cook as she wants to, lovingly, while coping with children, housecleaning and all that. Food is what suffers first – and that’s why we depend more and more on sliced bread, frozen foods, pressure cooker.”⁴³ In thus addressing and reworking the expectation that these days “nobody can cook as she wants to,” *Mastering* from the outset at once acknowledges the pressures facing the American cook and asks her – at least “on occasion” – to nevertheless master the art not just of cooking up “something wonderful to eat” but of savoring the pleasure of doing so – not least by indulging in preparing something worth waiting to eat in a moment when no one needed to wait, when “sliced bread, frozen foods, and pressure cookers” would suffice. She thus cooks up – and invites readers to indulge in – an altogether different version of the “Good Life.”

On the face of it, the fact that an occasion for unbridled pleasure might be at the center of *Mastering*’s conjuration of cooking is altogether unremarkable given the great love Julia herself felt for French food. She insisted, for example, that the book be dedicated to “La Belle France – whose peasants, fishermen, housewives, and princes – not to mention her chefs – through generations of inventive and loving concentration have created one of the world’s great arts” – a dedication that both anticipates and reinforces the Foreword’s opening gambit and ongoing attention to the “loving concentration” that goes into the art of cooking and the culinary lineage – even, dare I say it, gustatory auto-eroticism – that *Mastering* invites its readers both to consume and partake. But such an invitation was largely unprecedented in the broader context of Cold War American kitchen culture. For as culinary historian Jessamyn Neuhaus has argued, “the importance of maintaining the rigid gender divisions of kitchen duties and taste buds only increased during the Cold War”⁴⁴ – thus while postwar cookbooks targeted at men might urge

them to dabble in the kitchen or on the grill for the joy of it, cookbooks aimed at women rarely urged them to cook for themselves, or as *Mastering* puts it, to partake in “cooking for its own sake” – and “above all [to] have a good time.”⁴⁵ But while I think the gender implications of this culinary shift are not insignificant, I am equally interested in the underlying geopolitical ones – not least because Child’s role on the Cold War kitchen front has been so thoroughly overlooked.

Simply put, if the Marshall Plan aimed to win over the French to the relentless pursuit of American push-button convenience and endless – in the words of Julia – “hurry, hurry, hurry”⁴⁶ – *Mastering* offered American cooks the chance instead to “develop a real appreciation” for French food and a counter-fantasy of France’s inexhaustible pursuit of culinary pleasure. And underlying this invitation is the book’s attention to *unhurried* time. Timing is everything here, both in the sense that the book immediately addresses itself to those who can, “on occasion,” forget “time schedules,” but also in the sense that it called on readers to give themselves over to an altogether different approach to their time in the kitchen. Indeed, the book’s promise of “mastering” French cooking was premised on the refusal to give in to the temptation to cut corners or aim for short-sighted efficiency: As Child puts it, “One of the main reasons that pseudo-French cooking, with which we are all too familiar, falls far below good French cooking is just this matter of elimination of steps, combination of processes, or skimping on ingredients such as butter, cream – and time. ‘Too much trouble,’ ‘too expensive,’ and ‘who will know the difference’ are death knells for good food.”⁴⁷ For this reason, *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* might best be read as a counter-Cold War culinary manifesto rather than as simply a Francophilic mid-century American cookbook.

As *Mastering*’s allusion to “pseudo-French cooking, with which we are all familiar” implies, Julia was far from the first cookbook writer who aimed to introduce French cuisine into the United States, and it has now become something of a commonplace to imagine that if she hadn’t existed we would have had to invent her. In *The United States of Arugula*, food writer David Kamp argues, for example, that “there was that whole post-war Francophilia … so French cooking was in the air. It would have happened. But it happened explosively with *Mastering*. ”⁴⁸ Certainly, John F. Kennedy’s choice of a French chef for the White House helped to usher in a renewed openness to France and French food, and as historian David Strauss has recently argued, the emergence of gourmet dining clubs in the 1930s as well as *Gourmet* magazine, which debuted in 1941, helped lay the groundwork for Child’s culinary revolution.⁴⁹ But it bears underscoring that Child’s work to win American cooks over to an alternate

vision of culinary extravagance and unhurried time faced an uphill battle not simply in so far as it sought to refashion American palates and counter Cold War kitchen efficiency. For it also went against the tide of simmering antipathy toward France at the time: Cold War America was anything but Francophilic. As political scientist Kennan Ferguson notes, by the mid-1960s, Americans disliked De Gaulle “more than any other world leader save Brezhnev.”⁵⁰

And Child, confiding to DeVoto her experiences with *Mastering*'s initial test readers, underscored that for many Americans French food was a strictly acquired taste that many never managed to develop: “Now, when I think of it, it takes most Americans a couple of months of living over here to develop a real appreciation [for French food] . . . and some people we know never develop one at all, but stick to hamburger and ketchup and baked potatoes.”⁵¹ Julia had, in other words, a keen sense that the distaste for France was a matter both gastronomical and political in nature, and an awareness of not only the political stakes of making French food hot but also the sheer resistance that would be faced in doing so. Indeed, both her memoir and her letters throughout her time in France meditate on US distrust of and dislike felt for France. Child opens her memoir, in fact, by relating that “in Pasadena, California, where I was raised, France did not have a good reputation. My tall and taciturn father, ‘Big John’ McWilliams, liked to say that all Europeans, especially the French, were ‘dark’ and ‘dirty’”⁵²; in letters home, she frets to DeVoto about the increasingly “light and slight[ing]” coverage of France in the pages of *Life* and *Time* magazine, and reveals that even her sister-in-law “feels we may have ‘gone over to the French’ and somewhat disapproves.”⁵³ Much as Paul’s job asked him to make America palatable to a France wary of Coca-colonization, Julia’s masterpiece sought to make French cooking desirable in a moment when the US was anything but certain about the postwar allegiances of the French nation and far from enamored with it. Ferguson has thus argued that “Child [in her TV show] encouraged Americans to imagine France anew . . . as a land where produce was always fresh, where the corner market ruled, where gastronomy was priceless.”⁵⁴ His work productively encourages us to think of Child as both a food personality and a cultural emissary, writing against the tide of Francophobia of her time. But I think we need to take this reading a step further, not least because her intervention in Cold War cooking seems critically both domestic *and* transnational in scope. For Julia’s work in *Mastering* to preserve and exalt French cooking counters not only the frozen food suburbia showcased in American women’s magazines, but also the Cold War American narrative of convenience, mechanization, and what Ross has aptly termed “timeless, limitless development” with her alternative vision of

luxury and abundance at a time when that very way of life seemed at risk of being made altogether obsolete at home and abroad.⁵⁵

In a letter to Devoto dated February 18, 1953 Julia writes, for example, of her “guinea-pig” readers at home’s resistance to an early manuscript of *Mastering*:

I think that where they feel the ms. is pedantic, is where I have attempted to explain what is the right name, or the traditional way of doing things. I think this is all important, that the names and the old methods be correct . . . thus the book cannot be attacked for [inauthenticity] . . . and, furthermore, that traditional French cooking should be *preserved*. Who knows, the US may end up the final preserve, *as life is so expensive over here it is all pretty hard to maintain.* (emphasis mine)⁵⁶

There is, admittedly, no small irony in Child imagining America as a repository of the way of life in France that it hoped – indeed, was in the very process of helping – to market into oblivion, and one might be tempted to read the gesture as simply another form of Cold War Coca-colonization. But I think we can also see in it a direct undercutting of both Fordist propaganda in Europe and the Cold War kitchen at home. For as DeVoto puts it (and Child concurred): “I wonder how long it will take them to find that lots of labor saving devices, so called, are a snare and a delusion.”⁵⁷

Mastering the Art of Food Writing

If reading *Mastering* alongside Child’s memoir and letters helps us recognize her work to export the delights of French cooking and the pleasures of unhurried time in the kitchen as a direct challenge to the tricked-out American kitchen – and with it, the push for an ever-faster, ever-more-modern way of life – celebrated at home and heavily marketed to consumers abroad during the Cold War, it also helps us appreciate Child’s cookbook as at once a literary text and cultural archive aspiring to transform American food writing. For Child self-consciously crafts herself as a writer of not just a cookbook but a cultural text, suggesting in letters to DeVoto that *Mastering* required a preface not unlike that in Bernard DeVoto’s 1952 National Book Award-winning history, *Course of Empire*.⁵⁸ And *Mastering*’s success at winning readers over to her vision of France – asking us at once to take French food seriously, and imagine ourselves mastering the art of French cuisine and the leisure that making and eating it demanded – was intimately connected with Child’s success at helping recraft these recipes not just for an American audience, but also as pieces of art in and of themselves. She is exhaustive in her descriptions but she privileges technique

over fancy ingredients or being shackled to the particulars of the recipe, assuring readers that “eventually you will rarely need recipes at all except as reminders of ingredients you may have forgotten.”⁵⁹ And the artfulness of *Mastering’s* recipes was immediately picked up on by reviewers. Claiborne dubbed them “glorious recipes” and highlights that all are “painstakingly edited and written as if each were a masterpiece, and most of them are,”⁶⁰ while Jacques Pepin recalled of his first taste of the manuscript, “I read it like you read a novel, turning the pages fast, late into the night. I couldn’t believe that someone had broken it all down like that.”⁶¹ The pleasure of reading Child’s cookbook “like you read a novel” mirrors the experience Child herself comes early in her time in France to have when reading certain cookbooks: she relates, for example, of the “great big old-fashioned cookbook by the famed chef Ali Bab,” that she savored both its “succulent recipes” and amusing asides, and dug into it “with the passionate devotion of a fourteen-year-old boy to *True Detective* stories.”⁶² That she did so chimes with expatriate food writer Elizabeth Robbins Pennell’s insistence, in 1903, that “a cookery book can have every good quality that a book can have,”⁶³ and suggests the pleasure Child took in reading food writing helped her master the art of writing it.

Notes

1. Emphasis added. Beatriz Colomina, *Cold War, Hothouses: Inventing Cold War Culture from Cockpit to Playboy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Architectural Press, 2004), 16.
2. The Marshall Plan, officially known as the European Recovery Program, was a US-sponsored recovery program launched in Western Europe in 1948 to rebuild cities and national economies devastated by World War II with the twin aim of increasing consumer consumption and combatting the influence of the Soviet Union.
3. Ruth Oldenziel and Karen Zachmann, “Kitchens as Technology and Politics: An Introduction,” *Cold War Kitchen: Americanization, Technology and European Users* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009), 3.
4. Ibid., 17.
5. Greg Castillo, “Domesticating the Cold War: Household Consumption as Propaganda in Marshall Plan Germany,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 40.2 (2005), 265.
6. Oldenziel and Zachmann, “Kitchens as Technology,” 17.
7. Quoted in Richard F. Kuisel, *Seducing the French: The Dilemma of Americanization* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993), 38.
8. Allison Carruth, “War Rations and the Food Politics of Late Modernism,” *Modernism/ Modernity* 16.4 (2009), 768.
9. For a discussion of gendered scripts and postwar American cooking culture, see for example Laura Shapiro, *Something from the Oven: Reinventing Dinner in 1950s*

- (New York: Penguin, 2005), Jessamyn Neuhaus, *Manly Meals and Mom's Home Cooking: Cookbooks and Gender in Modern America*. (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003); Sherrie Inness, *Dinner Roles: American Women and Culinary Culture* (Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press, 2001), and her edited collection *Kitchen Culture in America: Popular Representations of Food, Gender, and Race* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001). For a discussion of the underappreciated nexus of domesticity and home front American food policy see Amy Bentley, *Eating for Victory: Food Rations and the Politics of Domesticity* (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1998). For a fascinating reading of how Chef Lou Rand Hogan's *The Gay Cookbook* (1965) works to highlight the pleasures of gay domesticity without reinforcing Cold War gender norms, see Stephen Vider, "Oh Hell, May, Why Don't You People Have a Cookbook": Camp Humor and Domesticity," *American Quarterly* 65.4 (2013), 877–904.
10. Kathryn Kellinger, "Julia Child: Still Cookin' After All These Years," *Salon.com* August 20, 1999, www.salon.com/1999/08/20/child/. David Strauss's *Setting the Table for Julia Child: Gourmet Dining in America, 1934–1961* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011) explores how the emergence of gourmet dining clubs in America in the 1930s, along with the rise of *Gourmet* magazine, first published in 1941, helped to lay the groundwork for Julia's culinary revolution.
 11. Emphasis added. <http://juliepowellbooks.com/blog.html>.
 12. John E. Finn, "Julia," *Gastronomica* 7.4 (2007), 95–7.
 13. Julia Child and Alex Prud'homme, *My Life in France* (New York: Anchor Books, 2007), 115. This proximity gets passing mention in Noel Riley Fitch, *Appetite for Life: the Biography of Julia Child* (New York: Doubleday, 1997), Bob Spitz, *Dearie: The Remarkable Life of Julia Child* (New York: Knopf, 2012), and Andrew F. Smith's *Eating History: 30 Turning Points in the Making of American Cuisine* (New York: Columbia UP, 2011) and receives no mention at all in Laura Shapiro's *Julia Child: A Life* (New York: Penguin, 2007).
 14. Child, *My Life in France*, 23.
 15. The screen title rounds this to "France 1949" (*Julie and Julia*).
 16. Child, *My Life in France*, 18.
 17. Kim Severson, "Film Food, Ready for its 'Bon Appetit.'" *NYT* July 28, 2009, www.nytimes.com/2009/07/29/dining/29movie.html.
 18. Quoted in Kristin Ross *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture* (London: MIT Press, 1995), 71. Literary scholar Alice Kaplan similarly points out the scarcity of the post-war years in France: "Five full years had passed since the Liberation, but [the city] was still heavy with the memory of war . . . Coal was scarce in 1949, and so were food supplies." See *Dreaming in French: The Paris Years of Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy, Susan Sontag, and Angela Davis* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 18.
 19. Child, *My Life in France*, 14.
 20. Ibid., 15.
 21. Ibid., 25.
 22. Ibid., 25. On a walk through Paul's Paris, she writes: "But at the corner, a favorite old building had disappeared. Not far away, the house where Paul's twin, Charlie, and his wife, Frederika, known as Freddie, had once lived was now

- just a rubble-strewn lot (had it been blown to bits by a bomb?) . . . There were many of these somber reminders around the city" (25).
23. Quoted in Charles McGrath, "A Jamesian Tribute in a Retelling," *New York Times*, November 15, 2010.
 24. Matthew Shaer. Review of *Foreign Bodies*, by Cynthia Ozick. Book Forum, October 28, 2010, www.bookforum.com/culture/-6591.
 25. Rebecca J. Pulju, *Women and Mass Consumer Society in Postwar France*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 32.
 26. Child, *My Life in France*, 70.
 27. *Ibid.*, 23; 36.
 28. Of her fortieth birthday dinner at the three-star restaurant Lapérouse, she writes: "Because of the season and the price, every table was occupied by Americans." *My Life in France*, 128.
 29. *Ibid.*, 28.
 30. Julia Child and Avis DeVoto. *As Always, Julia: The Letters of Julia Child and Avis DeVoto*, ed. Joan Reardon (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 2010), 48.
 31. *My Life in France*, 71.
 32. Quoted in Greg Castillo, *Cold War on the Home Front: The Soft Power of Midcentury Design* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), xii–xiii.
 33. *My Life in France*, 102.
 34. *Ibid.*, 102.
 35. *Ibid.*, 102.
 36. Quoted in Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies*, 4. As French cultural historian Ross explains, "The speed with which French society was transformed after the war from a rural, empire-oriented, Catholic country into a fully industrialized, decolonized, and urban one meant that the things modernization needed . . . burst onto a society that still cherished prewar outlooks with all of the force, excitement, disruption, and horror of the genuinely new" (4).
 37. Child and DeVoto, *As Always, Julia*, 79.
 38. Display ad (no title), *New York Times*, October 22, 1961, BR27.
 39. *Ibid.*, BR27.
 40. Julia Child, Louisette Bertholle, and Simone Beck, *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* (New York: Knopf, 1961), vii. Bracken's opening chapter puts the matter playfully but matter-of-factly: "Never compute the number of meals you have to cook and set before the shining little faces of your loved ones in the course of a lifetime. This only staggers the imagination and raises the blood pressure. The way to face the future is to take it as Alcoholics Anonymous does: one day at a time." See *The I Hate to Cook Book*. 50th Anniversary Edition (New York: Hachette, 2010), 5.
 41. Craig Claiborne, "Glorious Recipes: Art of French Cooking Does Not Concede to US Tastes." Review of *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*. *New York Times* October 18, 1961, 47.
 42. Child and DeVoto, *As Always, Julia*, 30.
 43. Child and DeVoto, *As Always, Julia*, 29.
 44. Neuhaus, *Manly Meals and Mom's Home Cooking*, 216.
 45. Child et al., *Mastering*, viii and x.
 46. Child, *My Life in France*, 91.

Cold War Cooking

47. Child et al., *Mastering*, vii.
48. David Kamp, *The United States of Arugula: How We Became a Gourmet Nation* (New York: Broadway, 2006), 10–11. Food historian Andrew F. Smith makes a similar point in *Eating History*, explaining that “America’s well-to-do had long enjoyed classic French food” and that “for almost 200 years, there had been restaurants in the country offering French fare.”
49. See Strauss, *Setting the Table for Julia Child*.
50. Kennan Ferguson, “Mastering the Art of the Sensible: Julia Child, Nationalist,” *Theory & Event* 12.2 (2009), 8.
51. Child and DeVoto, *As Always, Julia*, 49.
52. Child, *My Life in France*, 13.
53. Child and DeVoto, *As Always, Julia*, 75.
54. Kennan, “Mastering the Art of the Sensible,” 7.
55. Writes Ross, “Immediately after the war a particular fantasy was exported by the United States, along with the gadgets, techniques, and experts of American capitalism, to a Europe devastated by war: the fantasy of timeless, limitless development” (10).
56. Child and DeVoto, *As Always, Julia*, 75.
57. Child and DeVoto, *As Always, Julia*, 30.
58. Child and DeVoto, *As Always, Julia*, 70.
59. Child et al., *Mastering*, viii.
60. Claiborne, “Glorious Recipes,” 47.
61. Quoted in Laura Jacobs, “Our Lady of the Kitchen.” *Vanity Fair* (Aug. 2009), 9.
62. Child, *My Life in France*, 43.
63. Elizabeth Robbins Pennell, *My Cookery Books* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin), 1903.

8

MICHAEL NEWBURY

Farm Horror in the Twentieth Century

American culture, popular and elite, has long celebrated the purity and autonomy of farm life, opposing it to the corrupt commercialism of urban pursuits. Thomas Jefferson, for example, offered an iconic celebration of independent farmers in the years following the Revolutionary War:

Those who labour in the earth are the chosen people of God, if ever he had a chosen people, whose breasts he has made his peculiar deposit for substantial and genuine virtue. It is the focus in which he keeps alive that sacred fire, which otherwise might escape from the face of the earth. Corruption of morals in the mass of cultivators is a phenomenon of which no age or nation has furnished an example. It is the mark set on those, who not looking up to heaven, to their own soil and industry, as does the husbandmen, for their subsistence, depend on the casualties and caprice of customers.¹

A vast array of present-day critics, however, see darker and more troubled farms than Jefferson imagined. For journalists such as Michael Pollan and Eric Schlosser, pesticides, fertilizers, mechanization, monocultures, abused livestock, and corporate exploitation dominate an apocalyptic agricultural landscape. Agribusiness designs packaging to exploit fond cultural memories while simultaneously degrading farm life and food quality:

The way we eat has changed more in the last 50 years than in the previous 10,000, [even if] the images used to sell the food are the picket fence, the silo, the 1930s farmhouse and green grass ... It's spinning a pastoral fantasy ... There is a deliberate veil drawn between what we eat and how it's produced. If you follow the trail back you will find not farmers and ranchers but enormous assembly lines where both the animals and workers are abused.²

Suggesting that the 1930s farmhouse, fence, and silo represent a fantasy of agrarian idealism might seem odd to anyone familiar with the agricultural disasters of that decade, but a larger point stands: from the turn of the twentieth century forward, movie makers, fiction writers, and journalists

have increasingly pushed into view bodies mangled by agricultural machinery, workers drowning in silos filled with grain, and lands laden with synthetic toxins. Farms have frequently appeared not only as ideal homesteads near picturesque villages but also as cogs in the brutality of corporate agribusiness, or as isolated and alien outposts struggling for economic survival in depopulated landscapes.³ The farm has even grown into a privileged setting for stories of supernatural horror bound to the rise of agriculture's industrialization. Tangled with images of terror and mutilated bodies, Jefferson's once idyllic "labour in the earth" now often takes place on a threatening, quasi-industrial, vast and lonely landscape of corn. If, in the late 1700s, authors such as Anne Radcliffe and Matthew Lewis set their foundational tales of terror in the dark castles, cathedrals, and catacombs of Europe's declining aristocracies, twentieth-century writers frequently create chambers of horror in remote farmhouses and vast monocultures of commodified grains.

The Machine in the Monoculture: Frank Norris, Willa Cather, and D. W. Griffith

Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* (1906), with its grim accounts of death, gore, and exploitation in the Chicago Stock Yards, stands as the most familiar and unrelenting case of agribusiness Gothic in early twentieth century writing. Corporate slaughterhouses, entrapping and dismembering both animals and people, lend themselves readily to a vision of massive and shadowy powers inflicting pain on tortured bodies, but Frank Norris's *The Octopus* (1901) moves similar elements of horror to the wheat fields of California's San Joaquin valley. Bound to railroads, agricultural machinery, ports, and the intricacies of global finance, an often bloody thirst for profits drives the new breed of wheat ranchers building farms on vast, increasingly industrialized acreage:

They had no love for their land . . . They worked their ranches as a quarter of a century before they had worked their mines . . . To get all there was out of the land, to squeeze it dry, to exhaust it seemed their policy. When, at last, the land worn out, would refuse to yield, they would invest their money in something else; by then, they would all have made fortunes. They did not care.⁴

The Pacific and Southwestern Railroad, massive and mechanized, controls the movement of grain through this distorted agricultural system always on the edge of violence; scenes of slaughter highlight the frailty of bodies struggling with almost supernatural economic powers. Locomotives roll like monsters through the monocultures, materializing thunderously out of

nowhere, spreading carnage as they pass. As Presley, a poet visiting the San Joaquin, looks across a moonlit vista of waving wheat, he drifts into an agrarian idyll, hearing “the great earth sigh dreamily in its sleep. All about, the feeling of absolute peace and quiet and security and untroubled happiness and content seemed descending from the stars like a benediction” (48). Presley’s reverie, however, ignores the railroad tracks he stands on, until a nearby roar shocks him into awareness of onrushing sparks, flame, and a monstrous headlamp: “He had only time to jump back upon the embankment when a locomotive, single, unattached, shot by him . . . filling the air with the reek of hot oil, vomiting smoke and sparks; its enormous eye, cyclopean, red, throwing a glare far in advance” (49). The engine plows remorselessly through a flock of grazing sheep, transforming pastoral fantasy into the gore and violence of a smoke-spitting demon ripping apart bodies with monstrous efficiency. The monoculture morphs into the slaughter house:

Prolonged cries of agony, sobbing wails of infinite pain . . . The iron monster had charged full into the midst [of the flock] . . . All the width of the right of way, the little bodies had been flung; backs were snapped against the fence-posts; brains knocked out. Caught in barbs of wire, wedged in, the bodies hung suspended . . . The black blood, winking in the starlight, seeped down into the clinkers between the ties with a prolonged sucking murmur. Presley turned away, horror struck . . . [by the cries of] all but human distress. (50)

Similar scenes of slaughter echo through later episodes. Farmers herd thousands of jackrabbits toward a corral where workers wade in with clubs and beat the animals to a bloody death. A shootout near an irrigation ditch leaves almost all participants, both speculating farmers and railroad enforcers, dead and bloody on the soil. One among them, Delaney, crawls off into the wheat like a “stuck pig,” trailing puddles of blood behind him. Others eventually find his tortured body “deep in the wheat.” The corpse, twisted into an expression of horror, has “knees drawn up, his eyes wide open, his lips brown” (530). The search party recoils in “instinctive repulsion,” and some young farmhands, no strangers to violence, refuse to touch the haunted body.

This kind of devastation extends from the San Joaquin into the broader, tangled network of the factory-food system, to urban centers and shipping terminals. Forced from her farm by the railroad’s seizure of land and her crops, Mrs. Hooven dies grotesquely of starvation, searching for bread on the streets of San Francisco as bumper crops are harvested in the fertile valley and the wealthy eat indulgent, multi-course meals. In a scene later borrowed by several horror films, S. Behrman, the Pacific and Southwestern Railroad’s

most grotesque embodiment of corporate greed, falls into the cavernous hold of a bulk freighter as a grain elevator pours wheat in from above. Struggling to clear his lungs, climb a wall, or find any means out of this industrialoubliette, Behrman dies entombed by the crop that he intended to export.

My point about this catalog of brutality and human helplessness is not that *The Octopus* ought to be read strictly as horror fiction, but that its instances of fatalistic gore, violence, and suggestions of monstrosity would be perfectly at home in the genre. Furthermore, Norris's novel had abundant company in this melding of body horror, human impotency, and agricultural work at the turn of the century. Newspaper accounts, for example, frequently reported gruesome stories about workers trapped in grain elevators and farmhands or children run over by equipment. In 1909, D. W. Griffith released *A Corner in Wheat*, the first movie to rely on Norris's scene of entrapment and burial in structures meant for grain storage. Horrific and gory episodes routinely disrupt Willa Cather's lyrical accounts of grain growing on the Nebraska prairie. In *My Antonia*, for example, a wandering tramp, ill and impoverished, takes up work atop a thresher. After briefly feeding wheat into the machine, he waves to onlooking children and throws himself in, creating shock and a bloody mess. "The belt . . . sucked him down, and . . . he was all beat up and cut to pieces. He was wedged in so tight it was a hard job to get him out, and the machine ain't never worked right since," concludes *Antonia*.⁵

Such invocations of modern farming's brutality in the early 1900s by no means banished all agrarian nostalgia or even idealizations of the emergent factory farm. Turn-of-the-twentieth-century agricultural journals and advertising in them, for example, sang the praises of the same silos, grain elevators, trains, tractors, and threshers that mangle bodies in the examples above. In addition, the industrial cultivation of wheat and corn in the West enabled the commercial rise of Minneapolis as a center for the milling and shipping of flour, Chicago's emergence as a power in commodities trading, and turned Buffalo into a global hub for the storage and transfer of crops.⁶ Machines reaping vast acreage in perfect rows, grain elevators rising next to railroad tracks, and harbors filled with freighters marked the economic potential of industrial agriculture, even as they devastated an older agrarian ideal, leaving behind bodies in pain.

In *The Machine in the Garden*, a formative study about technology and the landscape rooted in nineteenth-century New England, Leo Marx emphasizes that the region's most canonical writers, painters, and politicians habitually sought to harmonize an agrarian vision with the spread of railroad tracks, mills, and other emblems of industrialization, offering a new form of pastoral consciousness. Thoreau, for example, might first hear train whistles by

Walden Pond as a violation of nature, thrusting unwanted urban commerce into an innocent countryside, only to liken them immediately afterwards to the cries of birds and other wildlife. Painters eased woolen mills and bridges into their landscapes, nestling them among rolling hills, valleys and family farms. These artists, Marx argues, imagined a “middle landscape” fit for use by modern industries, but tied still to a familiar, lingering conception of the agrarian ideal. For many of the writers and painters he studied, “the machine was a proper part of the landscape.”⁷ But, in the examples of brutality discussed above, a middle ground unifying “nature” and “machine” makes no conceptual sense, because no real contrast between the two exists. The land itself, thousands of acres covered by a single crop, reaped by machine and transferred through global markets, has itself been thoroughly industrialized, turned into a factory patrolled by fire-breathing, mechanical cyclopes.

Derelict Fields and Farming’s Degeneration

For H. P. Lovecraft, the transformation of farming centers less on monstrous machinery and more on abandoned farmland. As mechanized monocultures consolidated into a sprawling corporate food system, degeneracy and dereliction haunted Lovecraft’s vision of New England farming. “The Picture in the House” (1921) presents a farmstead gone to waste, the opposite of Norris’s California wheat ranches, but the two have an implied relationship. The expansion of Western farming and its methods, coupled with rural migration to more prosperous cities, leaves behind Lovecraft’s haunted New England hinterlands, the inheritor of horror’s global history:

Searchers after horror haunt strange, far places. For them are the catacombs of Ptolemais . . . They climb to the moonlit towers of ruined Rhine castles and falter down black cobwebbed steps beneath the scattered stumps of forgotten cities in Asia . . . But the true epicure in the terrible, to whom a new thrill of unutterable ghastliness is the chief end and justification of existence, esteems most of all the ancient, lonely farmhouses of backwoods New England; for there the dark elements of strength, solitude, grotesqueness and ignorance combine to form the perfection of the hideous.⁸

Farm horror here relies on rural isolation and degeneration more than monstrous machines and commerce. The farm stands opposed to urban centers, disconnected from their vibrancy and growth, rather than attached by the link of the railroad. In this pre-technological, almost medieval setting, a modern urban-dweller’s skills, tastes, and knowledge have no relevance and provide no security. Time and again, whether in James Dickey’s *Deliverance*

(1970) and the movie made from it or in the more outlandishly exploitative *I Spit on Your Grave* (1978), twentieth-century terror finds urban tourists subjected to brutality inflicted by anti-modern “rednecks.” Horror on the farm, though, distinguishes itself from more broadly rural terror in its awareness of a central irony: Food flows from the countryside to an urban population detached from agrarian life as it is actually lived. The agricultural landscape may be marked by the factory farm with all of its exploitations, or seen instead as an eerie, maladaptive casualty of modernization, but in both cases eating habits and twisted or broken food chains have high visibility in these works.

In isolated settings of dereliction such as Lovecraft’s, no good could ever come to a visiting city-dweller who ventures uninvited into a run-down farmhouse. The narrator of “Picture,” though, finds himself bike-riding on a semi-abandoned road in the Massachusetts backwoods when a thunderstorm breaks out. He seeks shelter in the only nearby building – a “repellent” farmhouse that “blinked with bleared windows from between two huge leafless elms near the foot of a rocky hill” (21). When his knock receives no answer, he lets himself in and finds two disturbing surprises: an original copy of *Regnum Congo*, a 1598 exploration narrative including sensationalist illustrations of African cannibalism, and a degenerate farmer, who stands “stout and powerful . . . His horrible unkemptness . . . made him offensive despite his face and figure. [His clothing was] no more than a mass of tatters . . . and his lack of cleanliness surpassed description” (23).

Far from Jefferson’s virtuous yeoman, though in some ineffable way descended from him, this farmer highlights the decline of what contemporaneous eugenicists called the “human breeding stock” in depopulating New England communities. Henry Perkins, a Professor at the University of Vermont, for example, had his own tale of terror to tell about genetic monstrosity in the backwoods. In a lengthy series of studies, he documented for Vermont’s legislature the degeneracy that he saw spreading through the rural regions of the state. Intelligent and ambitious farmers, he reported, had fled for better soil in the Midwest and economic opportunity in fast-growing cities. To be sure, Perkins emphasized, some virtuous farmers remained in well-tended, well-established, and productive farmlands, but in far too many instances, especially in the hills, genetic decline had set down early and dangerous roots. Perkins, for example, observed that younger people who remained in one village “appear to be of less high quality stock than are the older residents.” Elsewhere he saw that “Farms have grown up into weeds and homes . . . have tumbled into ruin . . . Stony hill farms are slowly being reclaimed by the forest. Long stretches of rugged mountains, rushing streams, and narrow valleys separate . . . people into isolated little

communities.” In order to arrest the problems of the countryside, Perkins recommended that the state “take over all marginal land, [because] deterioration [of the breeding population] can take place only in poor isolated communities.”⁹ Emphasizing the horror of genetic decline and the threat it posed to the population at large, Perkins lobbied successfully for the state-sponsored sterilization of rural residents from families whom he considered beset by histories of criminality, mental illness, unemployment, promiscuity, or poverty. Perkins was not alone. A well-organized eugenics movement spread across the nation in the 1920s and 30s, pursuing similar policies of genetic purification. Lovecraft, as several scholars have noted, fully embraced eugenic selection as an antidote to racial mixing with immigrants and other fears of white Protestant decline.¹⁰

The degenerate and “ancient” farmer at the heart of “Picture” seems to have a supernatural lifespan. At one point, in a distant and vaguely remembered past, he raised crops and slaughtered sheep in a more or less self-sufficient production of “victuals,” but as decades (or perhaps centuries) passed, he turned away from his small, rocky, and increasingly remote endeavor. *Regnum Congo*, though, with its cannibal illustrations, inspired him to other habits of food production. “Killin’ sheep,” he says, “was kinder more fun” after looking at the book, “but d’ye know ’twan’t quite satisfyin.’”¹¹ Accordingly, this “abhorrent” creature merged his history of New England thriftiness with Congolese-driven cannibalism. The full horror of this racialized decline on the farm bursts shockingly upon his urban visitor when a red droplet falls from a wet and spreading stain on the ceiling, landing on the centuries-old illustration of a cannibal butcher shop peddling human limbs and organs. The ruin of agrarian self-sufficiency in New England during the first decades of the twentieth century could hardly be more wildly sensationalized or horrifically overdetermined.

In Cold Blood: Mass Murder and Agribusiness

In Truman Capote’s *In Cold Blood* (1959), Holcomb, “A village . . . on the high wheat plains,” stands far from everywhere, in “a lonesome area that other Kansans call ‘out there.’ . . . The land is flat, and the views are awesomely extensive; horses, herds of cattle, [and] a white cluster of grain elevators rising as gracefully as Greek temples are visible long before a traveler reaches them.”¹² On this vast plain where grain towers have the status of a holy site, Herb Clutter, a man of small-town, Christian convictions, tends 3,800 acres, raising grain and cattle on River Valley Farm. The name, superimposed over red barns and open fields, could appear as a logo on packages of vegetables or strip steaks in supermarket freezers, spinning

the pastoral deception attacked by Schlosser and Pollan. Almost everything about Clutter's farm points, after all, to heavily mechanized agricultural production, abundant chemical inputs, the movement of commodities through global trading markets, and barely disguised violence inflicted on land, animals, and people. To the owner himself, though, adopting the best practices of modern industrial agribusiness does nothing to alter the essential meaning of his work. To Herb Clutter, who chose "River Valley Farm" despite the absence of any visible valley, his acreage stands as a thriving tribute to the wholesome opportunities that persist in modern agrarian communities.

In Cold Blood, though, works persistently against Herb's notion that any easily definable agrarian virtues endure in the land he cultivates or a village like Holcomb, which profit-driven agribusiness has shaped so fully. Lovecraft's flamboyant Gothicism, with ancestral monsters and ruined farms, should have no place in a region where modern grain storage facilities are filled to abundance. Clutter's Quonset huts, we are told, hold a fortune in sorghum, waiting to go to market. Cattle burned with the River Valley brand graze peacefully on the range. But for all of the peace, prosperity, and satisfaction, the horrors of agrarian isolation, violent monstrosity, and fragility of the body remain.

The structural irony of Clutter's self-reliance is, of course, that readers know all along that this pillar of the farm community will soon be bound hand and foot with his throat slit in the basement. Well before the publication of Capote's book, newspapers saturated their pages with the grisly murder of the Clutters in small-town America, and *In Cold Blood* leans with heavy irony on that foreknowledge of horror. When Herb, for example, signs a life insurance policy, he pauses to contemplate his mortality. The New York Life agent offers good-natured reassurance that reveals his blindness to a near future that readers see clearly: "You're a *young* man. Forty-eight. And from the looks of you, from what the medical report tells us, we're likely to have you around a couple of weeks more" (47).

Details of the Clutters' lives, some gently suggestive and others emotionally harrowing, point to a disruption of pastoral ideals that precedes the actual murders. Nancy Clutter, like her father, works mightily to cultivate a perfect and familiar vision of small-town farm life, all the while feeling vaguely aware of its tenuousness. A charming, energetic, fifteen-year-old, Nancy is "a straight-A student, the president of her class, a leader in the 4-H program and the Young Methodists League" (18). With "radiant jauntiness" and white ribbons in her hair, she stands out in the school production of Tom Sawyer. Scorning store-bought baked goods, Nancy teaches younger girls to make prize-winning cherry pies with a "crisp lattice crust" (24),

which she leaves cooling, perhaps on the kitchen windowsill, so she can move on to other chores. But, Nancy, on the day of the killings, also tells a friend that her father has been unusually moody over the last few weeks; she suspects that he has taken up smoking cigarettes on the sly, despite his life-long aversion to tobacco and stimulants. “Spook movies,” she tells her friend in a moment of meta-commentary, terrify her, but her boyfriend likes them, so, on the night before the killings, she goes with him to the cinema. “But you know me,” she adds, “Boo! And I fall off the seat” (20).

The dismemberment and death so visible in the fields of *The Octopus* reappears in *In Cold Blood*. Kenyon, Herb’s sixteen-year-old son, earns spare money in “exhilarating . . . rabbit roundups.” He and a friend shoot “half a hundred” of the animals in an afternoon, delivering the carcasses to a nearby “rabbit factory” for processing. In exchange, they receive “ten cents a head” (39). Herb Clutter, we learn, wears his wedding ring “on what remained of a finger once mangled by farm machinery” (6), an especially troubling image after Capote introduces Bonnie, the wife and mother at River Valley Farm. A once vibrant young woman, Bonnie now lives with depression so debilitating that she rarely leaves her bedroom. Long ago she moved upstairs to her own quarters, leaving Herb to sleep alone. At the suggestion of a doctor, Bonnie once lived independently for a short time in Wichita and worked as a file clerk, temporarily lifting her “sense of adequacy and usefulness,” but Bonnie “had liked it too well.” Driven by “a sense of guilt,” she returned to her world of tears in the Clutters’ expansive, isolated and doomed farmhouse (27–29).

Even the prosperity of River Valley Farm turns out to be a destructive magnet more than an affirmation of agrarian opportunity. The false conviction that the farm must be awash in cash draws Dick Hickock and Perry Smith to burglary and murder from Kansas City, over 400 miles away. Like any number of half-monsters in horror’s long tradition, Hickock and Smith are frightfully, almost freakishly, misshapen. Dick’s face is “composed of mismatching parts. It was as though his head had been halved like an apple then put together a fraction off center . . . The imperfectly aligned features were the outcome of a car collision in 1950” (31). Perry Smith has more severe injuries, inflicted by a motorcycle accident. “His chunky, dwarfish legs, broken in five places and pitifully scarred, still pained him so severely that he had become an aspirin addict” (31).

These monstrous agents from urban space emphasize that even in its geographical remoteness, Holcomb and River Valley Farm remain tied to the modern and urban world, to the moral and economic forces they seem to oppose. Though the murderers deliver deadly gunshots, *In Cold Blood* highlights throughout a cultural dream of agrarian virtues dying largely of its own

unbearable contradictions. Whatever Herb may think and whatever food advertising might suggest, River Valley farm is no self-sufficient operation, but a heavily mechanized wheat and cattle factory sprawling over thousands of acres and inflicting cultural, familial, and environmental costs. *In Cold Blood* includes not a single scene of anyone actually farming, making contact with the soil, or even the tools used to till or plant it. Quonset huts are filled with grain, but no visible labor put it there. Clutter, by all appearances, spends far more time in his business office than in the fields, running an operation so oriented toward finance and so intensely mechanized that, in Capote's account, it requires more in the way of business administration than husbandry.

The town center's architectural desolation also highlights a long-running vulnerability to networks of financial speculation and the vagaries of agribusiness. Depopulation and decay haunt the main street – an abandoned dance hall with a permanently extinguished sign, a “ramshackle” mansion now housing teachers, a “falling-apart post office,” and a “melancholy” train depot (4). Passenger trains never stop on the tracks through town, only occasional freight trains, presumably to haul away grain and livestock. The town’s bank closed in 1933.

Myrtle Clare, Holcomb’s gaunt and plain-spoken postmistress dismisses any possibility of Holcomb’s exceptionalism, connecting it instead to more brutal realities visible to any reader willing to see Holcomb’s devastation. Asked who she thinks killed the Clutters in the aftermath of the murders, she tells one postal patron, “Maybe it was you. Or somebody across the street. All the neighbors are rattlesnakes. Varmints looking for a chance to slam the door in your face. It’s the same the whole world over. You know that” (69). Mother Truitt, who asked the question, can’t bear to listen. She puts her hands over her ears, insisting that “I don’t know any such thing,” before adding a moment later, “I’m scared” (69).

“He Who Walks Behind the Rows”

No crop, it turns out, is more horrifying than corn. Tall stalks block vision, hiding monsters and leading to claustrophobic, desperate, and disoriented flight. When the wind blows across an otherwise silent landscape, corn sways with an ominous rustle. Bladed leaves cut victims running past them; stalks wrap around throats and limbs. Far from the *The Wizard of Oz*, killer scarecrows stalk victims in B-movie cornfields and nearby communities. Some entries in the murderous scarecrow subgenre include *Dark Night of the Scarecrow* (1981), *Dark Harvest* (1992), *Jeepers Creepers 2* (2003), *Scarecrow Gone Wild* (2004), *Husk* (2011), and *Scarecrow* (2013). No longer lashed inanimate to crossbars above the

fields, straw men – often visually recalling Leatherface from the *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974) – wreak bloody and supernatural havoc, typically (but not always) on young, attractive urbanites.

Stephen King’s “Children of the Corn” (a short story that spawned a film and multiple sequels and remakes over recent decades) opens on Burt and Vicky, a young couple in a faltering marriage, sniping viciously at one another on a remote highway in Nebraska. A cross country road trip, planned to bridge the emotional distance between them, has degenerated into close combat at seventy miles an hour. As Burt turns his vision angrily from the road to his wife, a child bursts from the cornfields into the road. After a “sickening” double thump, first under the front and then the back wheels, the car comes to a long, skidding stop, leaving the couple alone with the twisted body of a child, and endless rows of corn “march[ing] away as far as the eye could see, undulating up and down small dips and rises of land.”¹³ Examining the body, Burt and Vicky find a slit throat that would have killed the boy even if the car had not. Burt looks “directly into the corn . . . thinking that it must have been a fantastically good growing season . . . It grew close together . . . You could plunge into those neat shaded rows and spend a day trying to find your way out again . . . He had a strong sensation of being watched” (397). He forges into the rows to find an abandoned suitcase and a trail of blood-smeared leaves.

In nearby Gatlin, where they plan to inform the authorities, Burt and Vicky find a prairie ghost town, “looking like a set from a movie about the depression” (404). Washed out advertisements and other signs of lost vivacity and long-departed prosperity abound. Small stores, a diner, a movie theater, a gas station, and town hall, all of them empty, line the blocks of Main Street. The smell of an unfamiliar fertilizer hangs everywhere, something different from the scent Burt remembers from his childhood on a small farm in upstate New York. There, his mother gutted chickens for Sunday dinner and “organic” manure came from cows. Here, fertilizer smells like death, sickly sweet, calling up memories of his time as a medic in Vietnam.

“Children of the Corn,” like many horror films from the 1970s, points to generational upheaval and the loss of an imagined, halcyon past centered on stable, heteronormative, white middle-class families.¹⁴ Burt and Vicky move inexorably toward divorce, have lost all faith in religion, and been scarred by Vietnam. Small-town America, no longer an icon of simplicity or purity, spreads out before them in the heartland as a ghostly advertising arcade, an empty movie set. They see “faded cola and chewing-gum ads on the roofs of barns” and an abandoned Conoco gas station. A rust-flecked welcome sign reads: “YOU ARE NOW ENTERING GATLIN, NICEST LITTLE TOWN IN NEBRASKA – OR ANYWHERE ELSE! POP. 4531.”¹⁵ Gas prices posted

at a Union 76 station near the center of town are more than a decade out of date. Twelve years ago, it turns out, Gatlin's children murdered every adult resident and became old-testament fundamentalists worshipping "He Who Walks Behind the Rows," a vengeful God of Corn. Now, at the age of nineteen, children sacrifice themselves, wandering into the fields never to be heard from again, presumably becoming sweet-smelling fertilizer, to satisfy their deity.

"Children of the Corn" leans on the horrors of Vietnam, generational mistrust, and the reshaping of marriage and family in the 1970s, but it also dramatizes the consequences of twentieth-century industrial consolidation in the agricultural heartland. As corn grows more and more abundantly around Nebraska's "nicest little town," Gatlin sloughs into depression and depopulation, turning into a nearly uninhabited, culturally barren version of its rural past. Corn thrives, extending for thousands of acres to a lonely horizon, but only an unseen, supernatural power plants and fertilizes it. Even the isolated farmsteads of men like Herb Clutter, those who have mechanized their operations into vast agricultural factories serving distant financial markets, have simply vanished. Combine harvesters are gone, too. The discomfiting smell of human fertilizer persists, hanging sweetly in the air; a few abandoned farmhouses and outbuildings stand at the edge of town, where the cornfields pull back from the road, and near these empty homes "dirty chickens peck listlessly at the soil" (402).

Humanity is removed utterly from this agricultural process, but "He Who Walks Behind the Rows" assures the preternaturally freakish perfection of crops in a disturbingly sterile ecosystem that destroys any parasite threatening the monoculture. Hiding in rows of corn from the savage children who threaten to beat him to death, Burt finds an eerie absence of life, reminiscent of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*: "no minges or mosquitos, no black flies or chiggers . . . And he hadn't seen a single crow . . . Every leaf and stalk was perfect, which was just not possible. No yellow blight. No tattered leaves, no caterpillar eggs, no burrows . . . There [weren't] any weeds! Not a single one . . . There was no witchgrass, jimson, pike's weed, whore's hair, or poke salad. Nothing" (429).

No bugs. No Weeds. Perfect spacing and flawless form. The wafting fertilizer might just as well be anhydrous ammonia or maybe a whiff of DDT. The crops of Gatlin bear all the signs of being raised with the massive industrial inputs characteristic of agricultural consolidation – combine Harvesters, the broad wings of chemical sprayers stretched over fields, the devastation of local species diversity – but in this agricultural vision, even the few farmers who work factory farms have vanished. Only the ancient God of Corn and doomed and violent children shape the heartland.

Meanwhile, those living beyond the immediate experience of this transformation have no interest in it, no sense of connection to the system that feeds them. Burt thinks to himself, standing on the eerie streets of Gatlin, that he is “in a town in a state he had never been in before (although he had flown over it from time to time in United Airlines 747s)” (405). He imagines Gatlin in outdated terms, a place he has never seen but knows, incorrectly, through a shared but dying cultural memory: “Somewhere up ahead there would be a drugstore with a soda fountain, a movie house named the Bijou, a school named after JFK” (405). “Family Farms,” the farmers themselves, have disappeared, turning the land over to an omnipotent, mostly unseen monster. The corn grows on and on but children die or disappear at the age of nineteen. By the story’s end, Burt and Vicky, blind to the reality of the farm community throughout the story, hang crucified in the cornfields with their eyes gouged out. The uninhabited architectural skeleton of Burt’s fantasy farm town stands in Gatlin, but agrarian life all around it has vanished, transformed into vast and empty monocultures reaching to the horizon.

Blood-Soaked Farmsteads

I have of necessity been moave of necessity been more suggestive than comprehensive in this treatment of agricultural horror. Elsewhere, I have emphasized the benefits for those thinking about food, the environment, and humanist expression of reading horror closely, of grappling with its temperamental differences and visceral appeals so distant from more conventional “nature” writing (111).¹⁶ Horror (or borrowings from it) calls forth unapologetically the pure, repulsive, and even supernatural terrors that writers such as Aldo Leopold and Rachel Carson don’t. Horror dramatizes in the most primal terms that bodies bleed and cultural nightmares are literalized in the brutal transformation of the land into a factory. It shows the farm as the site of always incipient danger subject to the demands of unseen, absolute, and malevolent powers. That such imaginings should emerge from a vocation perennially ranked as one of the nation’s most hazardous would be no surprise if more idealized and softer visions took up less of our intellectual bandwidth.

Where Aldo Leopold writes of an “ecological conscience” and a “land ethic” that “enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants and animals” farm horror soaks fields with blood, slaughter, cannibalism, and crucifixions, stoking elemental fear and revulsion of industrialized landscapes.¹⁷ But the difference between a lyrical sense of pastoral loss and descent into the deepest, nastiest visions we might conjure extends beyond questions of literary style and content intrinsic to the books. Authors

such as Leopold, or even Pollan and Schlosser, who embrace grotesquerie with far more enthusiasm, speak largely to those already sympathetic to a critique of agribusiness's depredations, to those looking for such commentary when they pick up their books or watch *Food, Inc.*, *Fed Up* (2014), or *Super Size Me* (2004). Farm horror, though points to a very different audience, and, accordingly a much wider and deeper penetration of anti-agribusiness feeling and awareness, an instinctively shared fear of bloody and toxic industrial transformation extending across canonized texts and pay-per-view slashers. Here, the sepia-hued advertisements and shared cultural memories of agrarian idealism in supermarket aisles meet a bright-red, gory end. The horror in corn and wheat fields is vast, not limited to the grocery store, hiding who knows what, and spreading to a blood-soaked horizon.

Notes

1. Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, 1785 (New York: Penguin, 1999), 170.
2. *Food, Inc.* Directed by Robert Kenner, 2008.
3. For some examples of the scholarly literature on farming's industrialization and the literary treatment of it, see Florian Freitag, *The Farm Novel in North America* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2013), William Conlogue *Working the Garden: American Writers and the Industrialization of Agriculture* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), Kathryn Dolan, *Beyond the Fruited Plain: Food and Agriculture in US Literature, 1850–1905* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2014) and Derek Oden, *Harvest of Hazards: Family Farming, Accidents, and Expertise in the Corn Belt, 1940–1975* (Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press, 2017).
4. Frank Norris, *The Octopus*, 1901 (New York: Penguin, 1986), 298.
5. Willa Cather, *My Antonia*, 1918 (New York: Penguin, 1999), 119–20.
6. William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1992), 97–147.
7. Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 220.
8. H.P. Lovecraft, *Bloodcurdling Tales of Horror and the Macabre* (New York: Ballantine, 1982), 20.
9. Henry Perkins, *Fifth Annual Report of the Eugenics Survey of Vermont*, 1931. Vermont Eugenics: A Documentary History. www.uvm.edu/~eugenics/primary/docs/5thannual.xml.
10. Leslie Klinger, ed. *The New Annotated H. P. Lovecraft* (New York: Liveright, 2014), lxvi.
11. Lovecraft, *Bloodcurdling Tales*, 26.
12. Truman Capote, *In Cold Blood*, 1966 (New York: Vintage, 1994), 1.
13. Stephen King, "Children of the Corn" in *Night Shift* (New York: Anchor, 2011), 395.

14. Robin Wood, *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan . . . and Beyond* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 76–84.
15. King, “Children of the Corn,” 402, 404.
16. Michael Newbury, “Fast Zombie/Slow Zombie: Food Writing, Horror Movies, and Agribusiness Apocalypse,” *ALH*, 24.1 (2012), 87–114: 111.
17. Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac* (New York: Ballantine, 1986), 243.

9

KATHARINA VESTER

Queering the Cookbook

Cookbooks have a long tradition of giving instructions that are not solely meant to produce roasts, cupcakes, or beer. The recipes as well as the narrative they are embedded in carry ideological content that reaches far beyond the realm of the kitchen. As Elspeth Probyn writes, “We consume and ingest our identities.”¹ Cookbooks tell us how: they provide us with instructions for proper conduct, ideal behavior, and social expectations. As cookbooks were traditionally a middle-class genre, they often propagated middle-class values and gender ideals claiming them to be universal. Advising a readership that for most of American history was implied to be female on how to live their daily lives, cookbooks schooled their audience on issues including table settings and etiquette, raising children, pleasing husbands, household budgeting, shopping, sustainability, healthy living, family organization, interior design, and building communities. Cookbooks thus not only reflected and circulated ideas of ideal femininity, they helped to produce it. Expertly cooking, cleaning, crafting, and decorating, were, cookbooks claimed, poignant expressions of hegemonic feminine performance. Explicitly and implicitly the same texts stated that women who complied with the instructions would be rewarded with happiness and a sense of purpose. Cookbooks claimed women’s unpaid domestic labor to be the most evolved expression of their love for their husbands and children, and a woman’s most valuable service to their extended family, community, and nation. Hegemonic femininity in cookbooks is thus firmly connected to a heterosexual middle-class economy, in which a woman’s labor for her family is central to her gender performance.

Cookbooks disciplined gendered subjects and normalized heterosexual relationships since 1796, when Amelia Simmons published the first American cookbook.² Focusing on American society, this chapter will discuss how in the early republic cookbooks and advice literature regulated sexuality in the pursuit of producing American citizens; how novels in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century used food imagery to normalize

heterosexual relationships and to negotiate changing gender relations; and finally, how authors started in the second half of the twentieth century to use food to inscribe queer identities into the American mainstream. By the 1950s advice literature and fiction had established a repertoire of sexually connoted food imagery that could be easily understood by a mainstream audience. Authors who wanted to question or challenge heteronormativity or hegemonic femininity could refer to established images of cooking and eating to either normalize marginalized or othered sexualities and gender performances, or to make visible the normative power of traditional food discourses. Some authors did not stop there: As cookbooks and food discourses historically privileged heterosexuality and hegemonic femininity and excluded and faulted other experiences, some authors radically altered the traits of the genre. Challenging the structures, language, and rules of cooking advice, moving from imperatives to first-person narrations, from lists of ingredients to instructions for creative play, authors queered the cookbook, challenging its normative claims that had been established in the nineteenth century.

Heteronormativity and American Citizenship in Nineteenth-Century Food Advice Literature

American advice literature before the Civil War, preoccupied with defining what it means to be the citizen of a democratic republic rather than the colonial subject of a monarchy, educated people to become responsibly invested in their own well-being, while also instructing them to be prepared to sacrifice their own comforts for the sake of the greater good. This is perhaps most evident where advice literature focused on food and sexuality. In disciplining themselves and controlling their cravings, individuals trained themselves to subject their own desires and interests to their communities. This form of self-discipline was, according to advice literature's promise, rewarded with health, individual as well as that of the nation, and social recognition, since disciplining one's physical needs was regarded as a sign of refinement and sophistication and thus rewarded with social capital. The pleasures of food and sexuality were depicted as suspect, fleeting, and ruinous, whereas controlling one's urges was rightful, sustainable, and civilized.

To instill in their readers the self-discipline thought to be necessary for the citizens of a republic, authors encouraged them to control their needs on a daily basis, when making food choices or when confronted with sexual cravings. This is most pronounced in the nineteenth-century dietetic reform movements, at whose center stand Sylvester Graham's writings (1848). In long jeremiads against sexual activities not directly devoted to reproduction

(including any form of prostitution or sex outside of marriage, masturbation as well as marital sex outside the service of conception), Graham alleges that sexual desire grows uninhibitedly if food intake is not strictly controlled.³ The consequences of not complying are severe, admonishes Graham, as giving into illicit sexual conduct can haunt a family for generations with health problems, dissolve nations, and ruin empires. While American cookbooks of this time did not address the question of sexuality directly, they offer the simple, bland food Graham claims to be the protection against an immoral and secular society that can easily fall into chaos.

Cookbooks not only taught control over the body and the merits of republican citizenship, they also narrated a transitioning gender ideology and the ideal of the heteronormative nuclear family while society slowly moved toward industrialization, urbanization, and empire. Cookbooks, directed at female audiences and in the United States commonly written by women authors, promoted a middle-class Victorian gender economy that imagined gender as binary, oppositional, and complementary. To think of gender in this way – masculinity and femininity as mutually exclusive but complementing each other – did not come naturally or easily to Americans, it required training and cultural enforcement. One of its central ideologemes was that labor was gendered, and while men sought paid work outside the home, women best engaged in the (unpaid) domestic labor of love of raising their children and feeding their families.⁴ This class-biased concept, powerful despite the fact that it was the daily experience of only a limited group of Americans, was promoted by cookbook authors, who explained to their readers what this middle-class ideal of Victorian family life exactly entailed. In *The American Woman's Home* from 1869, Catharine Beecher and her sister Harriet Beecher Stowe included a full page of women's tasks that among other duties listed the following:

She has a husband, to whose peculiar tastes and habits she must accommodate herself; she has children whose health she must guard ... she is required to regulate the finances of the domestic state ... She has the direction of the kitchen, where ignorance, forgetfulness, and awkwardness are to be so regulated that the various operations shall each start at the right time, and all be in completeness at the same given hour. She has the claims of society to meet, visits to receive and return, and the duties of hospitality to sustain. She has the poor to relieve; ... the schools of her children to inquire and decide about; the care of the sick and the aged; the nursing of infancy; and the endless miscellany of odd items, constantly recurring in a large family.⁵

In listing women's duties, the Beecher sisters intended to demonstrate the value of women's work to society and the nation. In the nineteenth century,

women were limited in the ways in which they could earn money, make their voices heard, or be politically active. Still they participated in building the nation by engaging in domestic duties, the Beechers argued. They claimed that in the “domestic state,” the housewife is the “sovereign of an empire” that requires endless work and care for others.⁶ The Beechers used responsibility here to assign authority and expertise to women in the realm of household management. At the same time, the Beechers depict a heteronormative economy in which the father and husband is at the top of the household, “by the force of his physical power and requirement of the chief responsibility; not less is he so according to the Christian law, by which, when differences arise, the husband has the deciding control, and the wife is to obey.”⁷ However, like many other progressive Victorian authors, they flatten the patriarchal hierarchy by introducing the concept of love: “The husband is to ‘honor’ the wife, to love her as himself, and thus account her wishes and happiness as of equal value with his own.”⁸ Husbandly love was meant to prohibit the abuse of power that men had over their wives. Women, conversely, are admonished to submit to their role lovingly and cheerfully so as not to provoke anger or punishment. Love as the leading principle in middle-class households was not only meant to prevent an abuse of power, it also intended to motivate an increasingly educated female readership to stay in subservient, unpaid positions as a demonstration of their love for their husbands and children.

The heterosexual economy Victorian household manuals propagated did not initially center on the act of cooking. Middle-class women were not thought to be family cooks, but supervisors of enslaved men and women and servants who executed the recipes. In the late nineteenth century, the loss of slave labor and a steadily increasing quantity of middle-class households with a diminishing number of live-in servants demanded a reorganization of household labor in middle- and upper-class families. Women’s rights activists, such as Charlotte Perkins Gilman, saw a chance to relieve middle-class women from household labor to free their time to work or engage politically. Gilman designed community kitchens in which the cooking would be moved from individual households to central kitchens with paid kitchen staff serving several families.⁹ But, by then, the well-established connotation of household labor as labor of love zoomed in on cooking as the core of domestic work and feminine performance. The newly established field of home economics, and a growing industry of well-advertised household equipment, claimed that well-educated women best use their knowledge in the service of love, guarding the well-being of their families by cooking for them.¹⁰ At the turn of the century, middle-class women stepped into the jobs servants vacated. Cooking became the signature occupation for loving wives and mothers in the United

States and therewith a core element of the heteronormative economy.¹¹ As Susan Bordo summarizes it: “Men eat and women prepare.”¹²

Food and Sexuality in Literature

As nineteenth century culture charged food with sexual desire, lust, and love, these associations also reverberated in literature. As food connoted hunger, pleasure, craving, and satisfaction, references to eating or cooking were read easily as sexual innuendo. There is not a single way in which food and sexuality relate to each other in literature, but as the following examples show, the relationship is complex, productive, and ripe with meaning. Authors pushed against social limitations by having dining and cooking scenes speak about sexual experiences that were not sanctioned by society.

As novelists could not freely speak about sexuality in polite literature, at the end of the nineteenth century authors often used food imagery to refer to erotic desire and sexual acts. In Owen Wister’s *The Virginian*, an early Western novel from 1902, for instance, food serves to narrate the consummation of the marriage between the nameless Virginian and Vermont schoolteacher Molly Woods. After being married, the newlyweds make camp in the Wyoming foot-hills. The Virginian, as his last act of courtship, cooks a campfire dinner for Molly. The campfire dinner enhances his superior masculinity: A man able to prepare a meal over an open fire connotated at the beginning of the twentieth century an independent, manly life in wilderness away from the emasculating influences of cities and white-collar jobs.¹³ But cooking for Molly also represents his gentle and gentlemanly side, and his wish to take care of her, as “there was nothing for her to do but sit and eat at the table he had laid.”¹⁴ After that, the Virginian waits politely until darkness has settled in to join her in the tent. The next morning Molly makes breakfast, starting her new life as wife. Without ever mentioning what happens between dinner and breakfast, it is evident that the marriage has been “consummated.” Molly demonstrates her love and marital status by cooking for her new husband. This domestic scene still takes place in camp amid a breathtaking landscape, a thinly veiled Eden, insinuating that heterosexual marriage is the natural or preordained order of things.

Other authors challenged mainstream notions of marriage, sexual conduct or hegemonic femininity. In Kate Chopin’s *The Awakening* (1899), food scenes illustrate extra-marital affairs and female desire. Protagonist Edna Pontellier is lonely in her marriage and bored by what little society expects of her. Learning how to swim, she experiences a new form of liberty and a new awareness of her body that leads to her sexual awakening. Arising after a long nap:

She was very hungry . . . there was a cloth spread upon a table that stood against the wall, and a cover was laid for one, with a crusty brown loaf and a bottle of wine beside the plate. Edna bit a piece from the brown loaf, tearing it with her strong, white teeth. She poured some of the wine into the glass and drank it down.¹⁵

Like their sexuality, women's hunger was meant to remain invisible in the late nineteenth century. Women were to be in perpetual control of their appetites. The pleasure with which Edna eats in this scene indicates that she has let go of this socially prescribed control over her body. Washed and having eaten bread and wine – baptized and having taken communion, as it were – she steps out into the day. In a rather playful and light reference to the Fall, she takes along not an apple, but an orange to throw at Robert, her summer flirt, who had been waiting patiently for her under a tree. The sexual connotation of this imagery, especially with the biblical references, was easily understandable for an audience of the time.

Both authors use the descriptions of food being eaten and prepared to discuss the sexual relations of their protagonists. Throughout the twentieth century different genres and art forms utilized food imagery to speak about sexuality. In blues lyrics, the clever coding of texts was part of the pleasure in which listeners indulged. Blues lyrics commonly used food imagery to describe desire or sexual attributes of the characters populating the songs.¹⁶ Maria Johnson claims that from the 1920s onwards, female blues singers used the medium to express the sexual experience of African American women in a culture and at a time when this was close to impossible in other venues. Speaking out against racial and sexual abuse and stereotyping, singers used references to food to talk about oral and anal sex, lesbian intercourse, and prostitution. Peg Leg Howell claims in "New Jelly Roll Blues" (1927) "if you taste my jelly it'll satisfy your weary soul" and that "Old Aunt Dinah she's long and tall/Spreads her legs from wall to wall/Oh, she's got a sweet jelly, got a sweet jelly roll." And Bessie Smith sings in "Kitchen Man" (1929) of posh Madam Buff who cannot do without her kitchen man Sam because "His jelly roll is so nice and hot/Never fails to touch the spot," "His frankfurters are oh so sweet," and he has a superior skillset ("Oh, how that boy can open clam").¹⁷ Food imagery as a way to talk about sexuality can also be found in the lyrics of other, later music genres: The scholar Benjamin Franklin reads the original lyrics of Little Richard's "Tutti Frutti" (1955) as a reference to anal sex.¹⁸ Maria Johnson explores how contemporary musicians, including rappers, still use food imagery for sexual topics, in a pastiche of blues traditions.

In twentieth-century literature, food was often used as a concise but artful way to describe the nature of sexual relationships. The new freedoms of the

1920s generated their own set of fears. Interwar literature such as American noir, or hardboiled novels, channeled women's growing financial and political independence, as well as their claims to their own sexuality and bodies, into the figure of the femme fatale.¹⁹ The femme fatale was a woman no longer confined to the kitchen, independent, ambitious, self-confident – and possibly deadly to those desiring her. With the arrival of the femme fatale in American culture, food prepared by women other than one's wife or mother became suspicious, and potentially poisonous to men – just like the femme fatale's sexual allure. Food advice published in the 1920s and 30s warned a male readership, even if humorously, that the food prepared by women could cost a male eater his masculinity, independence, dignity, possibly even his life.²⁰ The new, hardboiled man was depicted as not taking any culinary risks, and rather cooking for himself or eating in a restaurant to keep his strength as well as his emotional independence intact. Sam Spade in Dashiell Hammett's *The Maltese Falcon* (1929) prepares liverwurst sandwiches for the femme fatale Brigid O'Shaughnessy just before the first night they spend together.²¹ This is not an act of caretaking or courting as in *The Virginian*, but rather to make sure that she keeps out of his kitchen as she cannot be trusted (and certainly cannot be married). The novel ends with Spade handing O'Shaughnessy over to the authorities for murder, thus neutralizing the danger she represents to men's identity, life, and privilege.

Another popular trope in American popular culture is the equation of women and food, both being objects of consumption. After World War II, the American public became simultaneously openly obsessed with and concerned by sexuality. The Kinsey report (1948, 1953) provoked widely discussed questions of sexual normativity and normality. Frederic Wertham's *Seduction of the Innocent* from 1954 asked whether the increasing sexualization of popular culture was corrupting children. A wave of institutionalized homophobia, dubbed the Lavender Scare in the 1950s, led to a witch hunt against homosexual state employees. While popular culture pushed the boundaries of what could be shown and said, requests for censorship became louder. They could not prevent, however, the publication of the first issue of *Playboy Magazine* in 1953. In *Playboy's* cooking column, men cooked solely to seduce women with foods that were highly sexualized, allowing the men to consume the meals, the recipes suggested, as well as the women with whom they shared them. The playboy lifestyle promoted in the magazine represented resistance against the normative pressure middle-class men experienced in the suburbs, some scholars suggest. As the lifestyle that featured penthouses and Aston Martins was unobtainable for most, the sexualized but simple recipes featuring unusual gourmet ingredients posited perhaps a cheaper opportunity

to participate in the fantasy.²² In the 1960s women's liberation identified and problematized the objectification of women. And authors again deployed food imagery to challenge such depictions of women. A notable example is Margaret Atwood's novel *The Edible Woman* from 1969. Here protagonist Marian MacAlpin, after getting engaged, strongly identifies with a steak her new fiancé Peter is eating, drawing a direct connection between her own body and the body devoured. Marian finds herself unable to eat any more meat. Peter, who begins to take control over Marian after their engagement, feels entitled to her in a way that Marian begins to resent. At the same time, she starts an affair as a way to rebel against the proprietariness Peter displays. Torn between these opposite impulses, Marian gives up one food item after the other, until she stops eating entirely. Finally she bakes a cake in the shape of a woman to offer him in her stead. When he rejects the cake, Marian eats it herself with pleasure, regaining some control over her life.

These authors used food imagery to speak out against normative sexual expectations and to inscribe experiences into American mainstream culture that have been marginalized and occasionally demonized. Fannie Flagg's *Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Café* (1987) tells of the love affair of Idgie and Ruth with the help of food. Following conventional romantic story lines, the couple meet under tragic circumstances, overcome obstacles, parent a child, build a life together, and are finally parted by death. The desire of the women for one another is subtly introduced in a memorable food scene: In the beginnings of their courtship, Idgie reaches without protection into a beehive to make Ruth a gift of honey, thus declaring her love.²³ In following a conventional romantic plot, *Fried Green Tomatoes* attempts to normalize Idgie's non-hegemonic gender performance and her and Ruth's lesbian relationship. The Whistle Stop Café that the two women run is a heterotopian place in which not only a different South is possible (one in which love, tolerance, and justice prevail) but also where women can escape the force of bias and law (though not cancer).

As cookbooks claimed that preparing and eating food could produce order and normative sexualities and genders, and thereby valuable citizens, literature often used food imagery to describe the messiness sexuality and gender can bring to the human experience, and attempted to make sense of it. In the second half of the twentieth century, food authors raised in both traditions wrote against the heteronormativity cookbooks traditionally propagated, introducing diversity to the cookbook.

Challenging Heteronormativity

When Alice Toklas published *The Alice B. Toklas Cook Book* in 1954, there were very few texts in mainstream culture that discussed lesbian couples.²⁴

Toklas published the cookbook as she was in need of money, but used the text as an opportunity to tell the audience not only about Gertrude Stein's favorite recipes, but also their life together. Toklas never explicitly discusses her sexuality with or emotions for Stein, but she deploys the culturally well-worn image of a woman cooking for and taking care of her beloved to establish herself as Stein's lover. Since this image had been firmly established by the 1950s as a way to narrate a heterosexual marriage, open-minded readers were invited to understand Toklas and Stein as having a relationship that was like a marriage, while less open-minded readers could decide to ignore the clues.

Toklas produced an early example of a culinary memoir. Culinary memoirs frame recipes with autobiographical stories and testimonies. While these texts often establish the authority of the narrators by explaining where their culinary expertise comes from, culinary memoirs also disturb the normative power cookbooks traditionally wielded. Traditional cookbooks explained how dishes were to be cooked the right way, often using the imperative, as if there were an objective way to cook a dish in a way that everybody liked. The culinary memoir, in contrast, frames the recipes it offers as subjective experiences. A cake recipe may be included because it reminds the author of a special day, a recipe for clams of a happy vacation, and so on. When Toklas wrote a cookbook in such a way that it included memories of her life with Stein, she not only replaced the heterosexual couple that had been so often at the core of American cookbooks with a lesbian one, she also in a way queered the cookbook genre. Instead of framing recipes as instructions for the perfect dish, she framed them as recollections of perfect moments and thus complicated the normative power of the genre. If there is not only a single, and by implication a right way, to do things, but many, then this can be extended to all areas of life over which cookbooks traditionally claimed authority. Toklas thereby opened a way to write non-normative erotic and romantic relationships into the cookbook.

In the seventy years since Toklas, many authors reworked and challenged the cookbook, traditionally a normative, identity-defining text. They made non-normative gender and sexual experiences the focus of their books, while also altering and twisting the rules of the genre in a way that either made visible cookbooks' normativity or found ways in which the normative power of cookbooks could be counteracted – a process that is referred to as “queering.” This is not to say that all cookbooks with a LGBTQ theme automatically queer the genre. Ceyenne Doroshow's *Cooking in Heels: A Memoir Cookbook* (2012), for instance, describes in an extended preface the experiences of the transgender author.²⁵ But the section with recipes that follows is traditional in structure and layout. It features lists of ingredients, clear instructions,

beautifully staged food photography, tips for the cook, and a pantry list. Here the author inscribes herself into a tradition of female authorship without challenging this tradition's normative power. *Fannie Flagg's Original Whistle Stop Café Cookbook* (1993), meant to accompany the novel, follows the expectations of a traditional cookbook, too, save the occasional citation from the novel.²⁶ Unlike the novel, the cookbook is focused on writing poor southern cooking into the American mainstream. Both these cases make political claims precisely by not disturbing traditional cookbook writing while expanding its scope in terms of subject and authorship. This differs from turning the genre inside out to make its investment in structural power relations visible.

It is also important to note that not only cookbooks with an LGBTQ theme queer the cookbook genre: There are texts like Peg Bracken's *I Hate to Cook Book* (1960) that challenge not only the feminine ideals cookbooks presented uncritically until the 1960s, but also the rules of the genre (for instance, when one recipe gives as cooking time: "you light a cigarette and stare sullenly at the sink. Then add the soup and simmer").²⁷ However, when cookbooks have an LGBTQ motif, they have to negotiate a space in a genre that has traditionally been heteronormative. This negotiation more often than not leads to a critical exploration of the genre.

With a growing interest in identity politics (and cookbook publishers' interest in new markets), the late twentieth century saw the publication of cookbooks explicitly directed at a homosexual audience. This gave authors the opportunity to discuss what they believed distinguished the homosexual from the heterosexual cook. Chef Lou Rand Hogan's *The Gay Cookbook: The Complete Compendium of Campy Cuisine and Menus for Men ... or What Have You* from 1965 gave a deceptively easy answer to this: "Many sad souls come home from a rough day ... and face the prospect of wading into that grim little kitchenette to whip up something cheap and filling. No 'little woman' to greet him at the door, with customary whine about something or other. No smell of a scorching stew either."²⁸ But in the end, the text defines homosexual men not simply as men without women, since Hogan suggests all recipes should be cooked "with a mad, gay swish!" The text, combining essayist writing with recipes, creates community through camp and insider banter. He addresses his imaginary unruly readers with stereotypical female names ("Gawd, Mabel how gay can you get"), chiding them lovingly where they overstep the rules of good taste and etiquette.²⁹ Throughout the text, Hogan plays with personal pronouns, and refers repeatedly in word or illustrations to drag. Hogan thereby creates a very specific image of gay men that he neither questions nor complicates. The tone is light throughout, and as a pre-Stonewall text, it avoids politics entirely.

Later cookbooks addressing a homosexual audience are often more nuanced, complex, and wary of normative assumptions when it comes to defining their intended audience. Most remarkable in its discussion of lesbian identity is perhaps Bode Noonan's *Red Beans and Rice* (1986), an autobiographical cookbook that weaves memories into its recipes. Written in the 1980s, the text is conscious of the problems that come with identity politics. It tries to emphasize diversity and individuality while simultaneously imagining a community based on sexual identity for political and emotional support. This does not have to be a contradiction, as the author explains in her chapter on potato salad:

Potatoes, I thought. Potatoes are a lot like Lesbians. They're all the same and they're all different. You have New potatoes, Russett potatoes. Red potatoes, brown potatoes. Boiled potatoes, fried potatoes. Baked potatoes, peeled potatoes. But all potatoes are composed of carbohydrates and water . . . Some of us play softball . . . Some of us wear three piece suits and do our daily work in courtrooms where we defend against what we see as unjust. Some of us don't do a damn thing at all. Some of us aren't even gay. Some of us are men. Men? What am I saying?³⁰

While Noonan tries to avoid an essentialist definition of what constitutes the lesbian subject, she still grasps for a way to define what constitutes the community's water and carbohydrates. In this process, she severs lesbian identity entirely from sexual acts and rearranges it around the experience of exclusion and marginalization, including the rejection by one's own family and childhood friends – an experience, she argues, that is central to lesbian identity.

While Noonan radically redefines the genre, other cookbook authors over the last decades have changed the cookbook in more subtle ways: Ffiona Morgan's *The Lesbian Erotic Cookbook: Cuisine Extraordinaire to Caress and Fondle the Palate* (1998) features regular recipes but they come under racy titles such as "Raging Hormone Rice," "Get Down Crepes," "Road to Ecstasy Applesauce Bread," and "Peel My Clothes off Fried Rice."³¹ The recipes are embedded in erotic short stories and photos of female bodies dressed and undressed. Morgan makes visible what is often invisible in cookbooks: the sexual implication in cooking for someone and eating together. Clearly in love with female muscle and endorsing body fat, the cookbook defines the lesbian body as less regulated by hegemonic beauty standards and erotic in its individuality. The cookbook, fully functional as a manual, resists the embodiment of normative gender performances and the incorporation of heteronormative narratives.

The Butch Cookbook, published in 2008 by Sue Hardesty, Lee Lynch, and Nel Ward, is a compilation of recipes sent in by cooks who self-identify as butch. Compiled cookbooks have traditionally been used to create community. At the same time, they defy the notion of a central, authoritative voice, since all contributors share in defining the community to which they belong. *The Butch Cookbook* utilizes both of these aspects to deal with the problems that come with the term “butch.”³² The cookbook struggles hard to achieve a complex and inclusive description of butch identity. While using some generalizations and stereotypical depictions of butchness, too, the cookbook gives ample room for self-definitions: In so-called “Butch Bios” people tell their lives as blacksmiths, community organizers, writers, and stay-at-home-butches, often problematizing stereotypical ideas of butchness. Truck driver Bevin Allison calls herself a “domestic butch.” Melissa Freet describes herself as a cross between Martha Stewart and MacGyver, and Marythegood writes: “Can handle sheetrock and split wood, but my pie crust will melt in your mouth.”³³ The short autobiographical vignettes paint gender as a spectrum rather than a binary.

Recent cookbooks, shaped by social media, millennial, and foodie culture approach the question of sexual identities often playfully and, in the era of marriage equality, with more lightheartedness. These texts can be equally unconcerned with the rules of traditional cookbook writing. Hannah Hart’s *My Drunk Kitchen: A Guide to Eating, Drinking & Going with Your Gut* is a companion piece to her YouTube cooking show in which she challenges the hegemonic femininities TV cooking shows have traditionally presented.³⁴ Some of the recipes Hart includes in her book, such as “Scotch Egg,” “Pizza Pie Chart,” or “Hashtag,” intend to produce a dish, but some do not. The ingredient lists are not always what one would expect either. (The recipe for “Enmeshed Potatoes” calls for, among others, “one overworked and under-aware father, one unfulfilled, budget-free housewife, one child vying for affection” [201].) The “Life Lessons” that accompany the recipes are equally unreliable, and range from “Always have tiny plastic spoons” (18) to “Sometimes reading *Scientific American* can leave you scarred for life” (27) to “The only guarantee is that it can’t ever happen if you don’t try. So if you’re looking for something that’s 100 percent . . . there it is” (60). The authority that cookbook authors historically claimed, not only over the readers’ tables but also their lives, Hart makes fun of, but not without occasionally producing some good food or some good thoughts along the way. In the chapter “Family and the Holidays” many of the recipes talk about family dynamics and the pain of negotiating one’s identities. One recipe, “Rainbow Cake Served with Skittles Vodka,” bears the headline “How to Come Out in the Gayest Way Possible.” With dark humor, it

structures coming out as a process in five stages: Starting with “Coming out to yourself” and ending with “Coming out to God.” Stage 4, “Coming out to every person every time in every conversation,” points out with some irony the expectation that even among the most liberal and supporting crowds the homosexual person needs to declare themselves, since the default in American culture is still to be heterosexual (208–12).

The normative power of the cookbook genre wields hardly any power in Hart’s text, but this does not mean that all millennial cookbooks have evolved beyond normativity. Foodie culture, social media, crafting, and new domesticity have led to a revival of advice literature that creates its own set of updated normative ideas of gender, sexuality, and families. To understand how and why, knowing that over the last 200 years of American history food and sexuality have been interconnected in complicated and nuanced ways can be helpful. As has been shown, since the Revolution, food has been used in the attempt to control sexuality, to instill self-discipline in the new citizens of the young republic, as well as to teach Americans a normative understanding of gender performance and relationships. Because food and sexuality have been so closely connected in nineteenth-century culture, literature and other forms of cultural expression at the end of the century began to use food imagery as a way to speak about and explore sexuality, when addressing the topic directly in mainstream culture was impossible. Literature used food imagery to discuss the emotions, hopes, and fears involved in sexual relationships as well as to narrate the changes in gender roles and greater sexual freedom and the resulting consequences throughout the century. While authors often promoted normative ideas of gender and sexuality in their texts, food scenes also served to present resisting views and inscribe alternative sexualities into the American mainstream. The examples presented here are by no means exhaustive, they are merely appetizers to an ample meal.

Notes

1. Elspeth Probyn, *Carnal Appetites: FoodSexIdentities* (London: Routledge, 2000), 17.
2. See Amelia Simmons, *American Cookery, or the Art of Dressing Viands, Fish, Poultry and Vegetables, and the Best Modes of Making Pastes, Puffs, Pies, Tarts, Puddings, Custards and Preserves, and all Kinds of Cakes, from the Imperial Plumb to Plain Cake* 1st ed. facsimile (New York: Dover Publications, 1984).
3. Sylvester Graham, *Lecture to Young Men on Chastity Intended also for the Serious Consideration of Parents and Guardians* (Boston, MA: Charles H. Pierce, 1848). For a thorough reading of the interaction of sexuality and food in Graham’s writing see Kyla Wazana Tompkins, *Racial Indigestion: Eating Bodies in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 79–81.

4. Susan Strasser, *Never Done: A History of American Housework* (New York: Pantheon, 1982), 181–202.
5. Catherine E. Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe, *The American Woman's Home* (New York: J. B. Ford, 1869), 221.
6. Ibid., 222.
7. Ibid., 203.
8. Ibid., 204.
9. Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *The Home: Its Work and Influence* (New York: McClure, Phillips, & Co., 1903).
10. Strasser, *Never Done*, 202–23.
11. For a more detailed historical reading, see, for example, Jessamyn Neuhaus, *Manly Meals and Mom's Home Cooking: Cookbooks and Gender in Modern America* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 7–26. For an analysis of women's labor as performance of femininity, see, for instance Marjorie DeVault, *Feeding the Family: The Social Organization of Caring as Gendered Work* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1991).
12. Susan Bordo, *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture and the Body* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993), 117.
13. See for more details Katharina Vester, *A Taste of Power: Food and American Identities* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2015), 77–89.
14. Owen Wister, *The Virginian; a Horseman of the Plains* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1902), 315.
15. Kate Chopin, *The Awakening* (Boston, MA: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, 1993), 56.
16. Benjamin V. Franklin, “If You Don't Like My Potatoes, Why Do You Dig So Deep?: Food Imagery in Blues Lyrics,” *Journal for the Study of Food and Society* 2.1 (1998), 15–20.
17. Maria V. Johnson, “Jelly Jelly Jellyroll: Lesbian Sexuality and Identity in Women's Blues,” *Women and Music* 7 (2003), 31–52.
18. Franklin, “If You Don't Like My Potatoes,” 20.
19. For more details, see Christopher Breu, *Hard-Boiled Masculinities* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2005).
20. Vester, *A Taste of Power*, 90–95.
21. Dashiell Hammett, *The Maltese Falcon* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992 [1935]): 85.
22. On *Playboy* magazine, see Bill Osgerby, *Playboys in Paradise: Masculinity, Youth and Leisure-Style in Modern America* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2001) and Carrie Pitzulo, *Bachelors and Bunnies: The Sexual Politics of Playboy* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2011).
23. Fannie Flagg, *Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle-Stop Café* (New York: Random House, 1987), 83–7.
24. Alice B. Toklas, *The Alice B. Toklas Cook Book* (New York: Harper, 1954).
25. Ceyenne Doroshow, with Audacia Ray, *Cooking in Heels: A Memoir Cookbook* (New York: Red Umbrella Project, 2012).
26. Fannie Flagg, *Fannie Flagg's Original Whistle Stop Café Cookbook* (New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1992).
27. Peg Bracken, *The I Hate to Cookbook: 50th Anniversary Edition* (New York: Hachette Book Group, 2010), 58.

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28. Lou Rand Hogan, *The Gay Cookbook: The Complete Compendium of Campy Cuisine and Menus for Men...or What Have You* (New York: Bell Publishing Company, 1965), viii.
29. Ibid., 6.
30. Bode Noonan, *Red Beans and Rice: Recipes for Lesbian Health and Wisdom* (Trumansburg, NY: Crossing Press, 1986), 46–7.
31. Ffiona Morgan, *The Lesbian Erotic Cookbook: Cuisine Extraordinaire to Caress and Fondle the Palate* (Novato, CA: Daughters of the Moon, 1998).
32. For a thorough discussion of the term “butch,” see Sherrie A. Inness, *The Lesbian Menace: Ideology, Identity, and the Representation of Lesbian Life* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997), 81.
33. Sue Hardesty, Lee Lynch, and Nel Ward, eds., *The Butch Cookbook* (Newport, OR: Teal Ribbon Publications, 2008), 159, 99.
34. Hannah Hart, *My Drunk Kitchen: A Guide to Eating, Drinking & Going with your Guts* (New York: HarperCollins, 2014).

CATHERINE KEYSER

Guilty Pleasures in Children's Literature

Like Hansel and Gretel approaching the witch's gingerbread house, children's literature broaches the subject of food with a mixture of delight and trepidation. Scholars such as Carolyn Daniel, Susan Honeyman, Kara Keeling, and Scott Pollard capture the intense emotion and ambivalence that attends eating and consumption in modern Anglo-American children's literature.¹ The child as cannibal or meal, the consumer as agent or tool, food as a symbol of love or lack – these contradictions and tensions are played out in narratives for children as they learn to navigate psychic and material economies. The late nineteenth century saw the advent of industrial food, artificial flavors, factory farming, and nutrition science, major transformations in food substances and systems that made food ever more available and yet potentially treacherous. At the same time that these structural changes reshaped the marketplace, the emergence of psychoanalysis lent new significance to the life of the mouth, as Freud placed it at the center of infantile erotic life, devouring desire and biting id.²

Curious and vulnerable, child characters who dare to take a bite out of the world discover the proximity of pleasure and danger. For example, in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), the eponymous child heroine inspects a mysterious bottle while trying to decide whether to imbibe its unknown contents:

with the words “DRINK ME” beautifully printed on it in large letters. It was all very well to say “Drink me,” but the wise little Alice was not going to do *that* in a hurry. “No, I’ll look first,” she said, “and see whether it’s marked ‘poison’ or not”: for she had read several nice little stories about children who had got burnt, and eaten up by wild beasts, and other unpleasant things, all because they *would* not remember the simple rules their friends had taught them . . . and she had never forgotten that, if you drink much from a bottle marked “poison,” it is almost certain to disagree with you, sooner or later.³

Lewis Carroll invokes didactic literature only to dispel its cautions. Alice's daring choice pays off: “Alice ventured to taste it, and, finding it very nice (it

had, in fact, a sort of mixed flavor of cherry-tart, custard, pine-apple, roast turkey, toffee, and hot buttered toast), she very soon finished it off.”⁴ This bottle and its label reflect contemporaneous developments in organic chemistry as well as mass marketing: the marketing of “essences,” the progenitors of artificial flavor, took off in the 1850s.⁵ Both prompted new and not unfounded fears of food adulteration.⁶

Trusting the label, Alice hazards her virtue and her health to ingest the unfamiliar.⁷ The potions and dishes that she samples blend the carnal, chemical, and colonial, as her tea and treacle, and even the contents of the caterpillar’s hookah, come from the other faraway wonderlands of empire. Answering, as Alice did, the instruction “EAT ME” in the affirmative, this chapter follows food in Anglo-American children’s literature from the beginnings of agricultural industrialization in the 1880s to the contemporary moment. During this century and a half of accelerated change to the food system, children were often viewed as the most vulnerable consumers, the bodies that would be shaped and perhaps marred by new practices and products. They were also, however, the voracious eaters who might define new relationships to body and globe through their eager appetites.

Edible Children, Unruly Appetites

In turn-of-the-century literature, the pleasures and threats of modern food were often reserved for white children, while brown children were consigned to edibility.⁸ In Louisa May Alcott’s *The Candy Country* (1900), a brown cookie named Ginger Snap guides white child Lily through the titular candyland. Kyla Wazana Tompkins observes: “Ginger is variously a feared cannibal and savage, a spicy brown edible body and slave-like figure or perhaps factory worker who toils as a baker with other cakes.”⁹ By helping Lily, Ginger Snap achieves his “freedom” and the physical transformation into “a white bread boy.”¹⁰ Instead of joining Lily as her equal, Ginger Snap, now “Muffin,” anticipates his contented end: “to feed a good woman who makes the world better for being in it, or be crumbled into the golden porringer of a baby prince who is to rule a kingdom.”¹¹ Alcott’s uneven apportionment of “aliveness,” Tompkins opines, reveals the intimate relationship between racialization and capitalism. Race defines “each character’s beginning and end points as variously, humans or objects, separated from each other by different relations to capitalism’s commodity chain: the one a consumer, the other destined to be consumed; the one to live, the other to labor and die.”¹²

African American children’s literature also writes back against such necropolitical myths. Langston Hughes’ poem “Winter Sweetness,” first published

in the Harlem Renaissance children's magazine *The Brownies' Book*, may seem a simple seasonal idyll; however, as Katharine Capshaw Smith points out, the poem carries "race implications . . . riffing on the edible child motif." The "maple-sugar child" described in the poem, though brown and sweet, "is not composed from plantation molasses, but rather from the forests of fairy tale."¹³ Paul Laurence Dunbar does something similar in "Little Brown Baby." In this poem, a father tells his child that "Bees gwine to ketch you an' eat you up yit, / Bein' so sticky an' sweet" from eating molasses.¹⁴ The father forbids the "big boogah-man" who might gobble the child up from entering the family home.¹⁵ Through this comforting paternal voice, April Merleaux suggests, "Dunbar rejects the notion that black children could be either eaten or made to work."¹⁶

A good deal of the children's literature that circulated on both sides of the Atlantic tried to project and protect an ideal of whiteness through a fantasy of wholesome eating. In *The Secret Garden*, first published serially in *The American Magazine* from 1910 to 1911, Mary Lennox grows from a spoiled and sickly child in India to the garden-tending, robust, and healthy girl in the English countryside. The estate's heir, Colin, also ascends from apparent invalidism into healthy, mobile, masculine embodiment. Daniel observes: "As they start to become real children, Mary and Colin become ravenous" and thrive on "wholesome British fare of which they eat their fill."¹⁷ P.L. Travers' Mary Poppins sweetens medicine with magical flavors – "strawberry ice," "lime-juice cordial," and "milk" for the babies.¹⁸ She also reinforces imperial hierarchies through food. Poppins and her charges visit a zoo on the night of a full moon to witness the public feeding of humans: "Bottles of milk were being thrown in to the babies, who made soft little grabs with their hands and clutched them greedily. The older children snatched sponge-cakes and dough-nuts from the forks and began to eat ravenously" (160–1). This spectacle is a cautionary tale, as Jane feels sorry for "the poor humans" (162). A panther and a dingo, both native to colonized lands, watch with glee. A firm hand like Poppins's is clearly required to train English children from the natural state of animality and savagery into imperial self-control: "Eat slowly please. You're not starving savages!"¹⁹

As these examples attest, in early twentieth-century children's literature, eating too much or the wrong thing could cause the precipitous loss of status. In Beatrix Potter's *Peter Rabbit* (1902), the young bunny disregards his mother's warnings and steals from Mr. McGregor's garden. Though this fable ends happily, Peter's animal infraction threatens Mrs. Rabbit's quasi-human household.²⁰ In L. M. Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables* (1908), Anne accidentally serves Diana currant wine instead of raspberry cordial. A red-headed orphan, Anne has only Marilla's word for her virtue, and

Mrs. Barry concludes that she is “a thoroughly bad, wicked girl.”²¹ Indeed, lavish and demonstrative Anne struggles with the disciplinary ideals of temperance and home economics: “There’s so little scope for imagination in cookery. You just have to go by rules.”²²

In C. S. Lewis’s *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* (1950), the White Witch woos churlish Edmund with Turkish Delight, a symbol of Oriental allure opposed to British virtue, further fraught because sugar was strictly rationed in World War II when the novel is set.²³ In Narnia, the Beavers serve the children wholesome, domestic fare, “creamy milk” and “gloriously sticky marmalade.” The narrator even intrudes to “agree” that “there’s nothing to beat good freshwater fish.”²⁴ In the midst of this British feast, Edmund absconds, indicating that (for now, anyway) his palate has been spoiled, his loyalty misdirected. To give in to one’s appetite could variously mean risking your skin (like Peter Rabbit), your social class (like Anne), or your soul (like Edmund).

“Uneaten and Unbeaten”: Shared Hungers and Picky Eaters

Depression-era and wartime scarcity sharpened the didactic messages of Anglo-American children’s literature. Lois Lenski’s *Spinach Boy* (1930) celebrates “protective foods,” vegetables with vitamins and minerals.²⁵ In this tale, young Timothy Appleseed, known as “Spinach Boy,” eats his daily greens with gusto. The “huckster man” tries to con him into artificial flavors: “Bestever Brand – smells like fruit – trees in bloom – apricots – lasts forever – never say die – orange lemon prune juice – Bestever in the world,” but the wise and healthful Spinach Boy accepts no substitutes.²⁶ Lenski’s best known work educates readers about food labor and rural conditions. As Marcie Cohen Ferris observes, “[Lenski’s] beloved series of regional novels, including many southern-themed stories – such as *Bayou Suzette* (1943), *Strawberry Girl* (1945), *Blue Ridge Billy* (1946), and *Mama Hattie’s Girl* (1953) – introduced the foodways, culture, and family struggles of both white and black Depression-era children to young readers around the world.”²⁷ In *Cotton in my Sack* (1949), the children of sharecroppers in Arkansas eat cold biscuits and molasses, unable to afford the school’s hot lunch or vendors’ wares.²⁸

In *Battle in the Barnyard: Stories and Pictures for Workers’ Children* (1932), Helen Kay represents childhood poverty through hunger. In “Bread,” Jane is so hungry in school that she imagines that her teacher “turn[s] suddenly into a huge loaf of bread,” and she indulges in cannibalistic fantasy: “And how she would love to get a piece.”²⁹ A classmate recognizes her hunger and enlists her to join up with other children in picketing for

“Free Lunches for Kids of the Unemployed.”³⁰ Langston Hughes and Arna Bontemps collaborated on *Popo and Fifina: Children of Haiti* (1932), which contrasts gaudy candies, which the fisherman’s children can ill afford, with the natural beauty of marine life, “bright and pretty as sticks of candy.”³¹ Bontemps wrote another children’s story about food in the 1930s called *Bubber Goes to Heaven*, which was posthumously published in 1998.³² When Bubber grows wings and flies to heaven, he discovers that all the food is free. Michelle Martin points out that for “a boy who has rarely had enough to eat while alive,” repletion is paradise: “No manna, milk, or honey here. These folks *eat!*”³³ Bontemps places hospitality and feasting at the center of African American culture and reminds the reader of black hunger past and present.

Though published in the postwar period, Mary Norton’s *The Borrowers* (1952) evokes the “making-do” of the war period. The tiny Clock family – Pod, Homily, and their daughter Arriety – live underneath the kitchen in an English country house and make periodic forays to “borrow” their supplies. The Clock Family cherish tiny pleasures a human would overlook: “in front of each place, oh, delight of delights, a single potted shrimp.”³⁴ The risks of venturing out from their hidey-hole also recall the Blitz. Pod and Homily warn Arriety that if she aspires to a further horizon, she might wind up like her cousin Eggletina, who became a cat’s breakfast when she ventured upstairs. They pun on “Egg”-letina’s name when they advise Arriety to remain “uneaten and unbeaten both” (49). Patricia Pace sees Arriety’s miniaturism as a sign of the novel’s anorexic vision of feminine virtue, but Chris Hopkins contends that her appetite for wide-open spaces rejects isolationism and insularity.³⁵ This tension between anxiety and adventure evokes the life of a refugee, who makes do and makes home but always with a sense of contingency and risk. Arriety’s mother Homily fears the foreign eating habits she will encounter when they take to the fields: “‘What do they eat?’ wailed Homily. ‘Caterpillars . . . How do they cook? Out of doors?’” (151). The borrowers are prey themselves – at risk from “the weasels and the crows and the stoats” (174), but much as M. F. K. Fisher enjoins in *How to Cook a Wolf* (1942), they wrest pleasure from the direst of circumstances: “Think of a salad made of those tender shoots of young hawthorn – bread and cheese we used to call it – with sorrel and dandelion and a sprinkling of thyme and wild garlic. Homily was a good cook remember. It wasn’t for nothing that the Clocks had lived under the kitchen” (174).³⁶

E. B. White’s novels of the 1940s and 1950s celebrate food’s restored abundance, but they complicate the nuclear family, that emblem of postwar harmony. Both *Stuart Little* (1945) and *Charlotte’s Web* raise questions about who should be at (or on) the table. Stuart Little, a mouse born to

humans, feels out of place in his home and community and is often imperiled because of his size. He bonds with human children through their shared taste in sweets, naming himself "Chairman of the World" and deeming "ice cream with chocolate sauce" the most "important" subject. Stuart even belittles the teacher for nutritional ignorance: "Vitamin trouble ... She took Vitamin D when she needed A."³⁷ It seems that the right dietary knowledge can turn a mouse into a real boy – at least in his peers' eyes. In terms of rodential gorging, White's rat Templeton from *Charlotte's Web* (1952) takes the cake (and the ham sandwich, Swiss cheese, and rotten apple). He luxuriates in State Fair garbage: "What feasting and carousing! A real gorge! I must have eaten the remains of thirty lunches. Never have I seen such leavings, and everything well-ripened and seasoned with the passage of time and the heat of the day. Oh, it was rich, my friends, rich!"³⁸ This carnivalesque feast on just the "leavings" reflects the atmosphere of postwar prosperity.

Marah Gubar argues that Templeton's "doctrine of all-encompassing incorporation" articulates the deeper ethics of the book: "just as Templeton refuses to engage in any kind of abjection – 'I never throw anything away,' he boasts – White's story insists on embracing even the most abject of objects and creatures."³⁹ At the same time that Wilbur's anthropomorphism makes his potential edibility tragic to both Fern and reader, White also embraces a world where living creature eats living creature: Templeton admits he'd happily devour a gosling, and Charlotte lures insects to her web. The farm, with all the complications of the human and animal food chain, manifests abundant life: "In early summer there are plenty of things for a child to eat and drink and suck and chew ... Everywhere you look is life."⁴⁰ It incorporates death into its processes too, through slaughter and seasons, and the brief term of Charlotte's life reflects that cyclical relation.

As Fern's coming-of-age in *Charlotte's Web* reflects, a good deal of postwar US children's literature trains young women in proper femininity through food. The Nancy Drew books, for example, pose plump Bess against slim Nancy Drew. While Nancy loves to cook – and decorates cakes – Bess loves to eat. In the first installments, from the 1930s, all of the children have hearty appetites; in later installments, Nancy consistently cautions Bess to watch her figure.⁴¹ Of course, some postwar children's authors seem to take keen delight in dismantling the feminine mystique through childhood misbehaviors. In Beverly Cleary's *Beezus and Ramona* (1955), Ramona destroys not one but two birthday cakes, emblems of maternal love and domestic virtue.⁴² It seems telling that her preteen sister Beezus would like to grow up to be like their chic, single aunt who lives on her own in an apartment instead of their beleaguered, cake-baking mother.

Ramona's willfulness reflects another important figure in children's literature of the 1950s and beyond: the picky eater. While finicky Tigger rejected honey, "haycorns" and thistles in favour of Kanga's "Extract of Malt" in *The House at Pooh Corner* (1928), a whole cadre of picky eaters populated children's literature of the postwar period, thanks in part to US postwar prosperity and convenience food.⁴³ In *Bread and Jam for Frances* (1964), for example, written by Russell Hoban and illustrated by Lillian Hoban, Frances writes a catchy jingle about her favorite food, which she would like to eat exclusively. Frances' mother begins giving her bread and jam for all meals, and this surfeit of sugar leaves Frances' stomach rumble, her body weak, and her palate bored. She decides to go back to a balanced diet. Honeyman glosses this dietary training as the feminization of Frances: "Frances (and the audience-child who chooses to identify with her) [is] being socialized to consume delicately, moderately, in a balanced and tasteful way."⁴⁴

Perhaps the most famous postwar US title about picky eating does away with the figure of the child all together. In *Green Eggs and Ham* (1960), the black-hatted figure flees the offending food.⁴⁵ He repeats "I do not like it," and then "Sam-I-Am" offers up a whimsical itinerary of absurd vehicles, contexts, and destinations where they could enjoy this unusual dish. The vehement repetition of "I do not like them" and "I will not eat them" begins to seem, as a result of this wild ride, a pathetic renunciation of exploration and fun. By reversing the typical word order of the dish "ham and eggs," Dr. Seuss makes it exotic.⁴⁶ When the black-hatted creature finally tries the dish, he enjoys it, repeating the whole catalog, this time in affirmation. This reversal anticipates the Grinch's new commensal enthusiasm when he joins the Whos down in Whoville for their Christmas celebration and carves Roast Beast himself.⁴⁷ Dr. Seuss rejects pickiness as a failure of imagination and champions the oral and unruly pleasures of rhyme and nonsense.

The picky eater intersects with the disobedient child in fictions that both celebrate a topsy-turvy world and then restore the social and dietary order in the nick of time. In Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are* (1963), Max dons a wolf suit and chases the dog with a fork – threatening to wound or even eat him. His mother controls him by sending him to bed without any supper, but that gesture merely launches his personal ship to the outlying islands of the Wild Things who want to eat *him* up, they love him so. Keeling and Pollard point out that the smell of supper calls Max home, domesticating his desires and pulling him back from the frontiers of canine or cannibal imaginings.⁴⁸ Indeed, the final line of the book – "and it was still hot" – underscores the symbolic difference, famously articulated by Claude Lévi-Strauss, between the raw and the cooked.⁴⁹ Max returns from his wild adventure and is welcomed back into civilization and species through the

human arts of cooking. In Tomie DePaola's *Strega Nona* (1975), Big Anthony, in spite of his size, has a child-like relationship to Strega Nona, who instructs him not to use her pasta pot. Recalling only a few lines of her magic song, Big Anthony spills spaghetti all over the town, just in time for Strega Nona to rescue him. Her punishment: he must eat every bit of pasta that he created. Big Anthony must clean his plate, and his stomach-ache will remind him not to break the rules in the future.⁵⁰

Some children's literature published in the 1960s and 1970s makes indirect allusions to World War II and its costs, even in imagining a US cornucopia. Maurice Sendak's *In the Night Kitchen* (1970) features what Keeling and Pollard evocatively describe as "a fantastic dreamscape of early twentieth-century commercially prepared staples (bottles of cream of tartar and baking sodas, bags of sugar and flour, containers of salt, yeast, and coffee)."⁵¹ In this kitchen, Mickey the protagonist encounters enormous bakers who resemble Oliver Hardy. Their Hitler-mustaches make their plan to bake this boy in their oven an unsettling allusion to the Holocaust. In the nick of time, Mickey soars above in an airplane made of bread. Eric Carle's *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* (1969) celebrates a silly smorgasbord but may respond to a grimmer history.⁵² Born in America to German immigrants, Carle and his family moved back to Germany in 1929. Bruce Handy suggests that the "comic abundance" of the caterpillar's meal "had personal meaning for Carle, a German who had experienced severe deprivation when, at fifteen, he was put to work on the Siegfried Line in the waning days of World War II, digging antitank ditches alongside prisoners of war and slave laborers."⁵³ Later, working for the US military during the occupation, Carle reveled in the dining hall's luxuries, "surreptitiously stuff[ing] peanut butter sandwiches, lumps of butter, cubes of sugar, leftover bits of steak, and desserts into my pockets."⁵⁴ The caterpillar's ravenous appetite evokes the hunger of refugees both for sustenance and freedom.

Industrial Food and Globalized Cuisines

Thus far, I have followed two major dynamics in the children's literature of food: dietary discipline and culinary pleasure, hunger as a source of anxiety and food as a tool of affiliation. I now turn to children's literature as an explicit response to the global-industrial food system. The Harper and Brothers' City and Country series sought to acquaint children with the production and circulation of industrial food, *The Story of Bread* (1927), *The Story of Milk and How it Came About* (1927), and *The Story of Markets* (1929) all used food to suggest the timelessness of agricultural production and the modernity of industrial food. These volumes both familiarized

children with industry and preserved in narrative form the premodern foodways feared to be imminently obsolete.⁵⁵ Laura Ingalls Wilder does something similar in her step-by-step descriptions of curing venison and tapping maple syrup in *Little House in the Big Woods* (1932), an indirect response to the food industry, as biographer Caroline Fraser contends.⁵⁶ In a 1911 speech for the Missouri Home Makers' Conference, Wilder celebrated the "Small Farm Home" as a healthier, more profitable life for American families. (She does confess that having a "cream separator" saves her labor and reduces waste.)⁵⁷ In a nation increasingly industrialized, Wilder's reminiscences about frontier food – the sugar snow "better even than their Christmas candy" – offer a glimpse of the past as well as a sidelong glance at the present.⁵⁸

In *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (1964), Roald Dahl also writes with nostalgia, not for agriculture but for imperialism, which he recuperates in an industrial setting. Oompa-Loompas, "miniature pygmies ... from Africa" in the original edition, happily live and work in the factory for no wages – only cacao beans.⁵⁹ As Clare Bradford and Philip Nel elucidate, Dahl revamps colonialism for a corporate age without renovating its racism, even in the 1973 revised edition of the book that whitens the workers.⁶⁰ At the same time that he advocates the use of racialized labor, Dahl fears that mass production and prosperity might turn the white child into a consuming machine. Each Golden-Ticket-bearing child besides Charlie consumes compulsively, taking no pleasure in the act. As Honeyman observes, gum-chewing Violet is "addicted to an un-substance."⁶¹ This eating evacuates their subjectivity, as Kachur points out: "the disobedient children grotesquely merge with the objects of their own fleshly, transgressive desires – Augustus with chocolate, Violet with chewing gum."⁶² These physical transformations are racialized, as Augustus's face is "painted brown with chocolate" and Violet's skin changes color. In this imagery, Dahl draws upon a history of fairy tales warning white children that bad behavior or sloppy consumption would result in racial transformation. By contrast, self-mastering Charlie ascends in the Great Glass Elevator, a vehicle of imperial vision and white virtue.

Though *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* celebrates the food industry, Dahl's novel *The BFG* (1981) questions industrial ethics through a cannibal's conscientious objection. The "Big Friendly Giant" is so named because he doesn't eat children, while his fellow giants are called "FLESHLUMPEATER," "BONECRUNCHER," and "CHILDCHEWER."⁶³ When orphan Sophie, slated to be their next meal, condemns their carnivorous habits, the BFG reminds her that "human beans" are also bonecrunchers and meatdrippers:

"You is a human bean and you is saying it is grizzling and horrigust for giants to be eating human beans . . . Human beans is always killing other human beans." He was right. Of course he was right and Sophie knew it. She was beginning to wonder whether humans were actually any better than giants. "Even so," she said, defending her own race, "I think it's rotten that those foul giants should go off every night to eat humans. Humans have never done *them* any harm." "That is what the little piggy-wig is saying every day," the BFG answered. "He is saying, 'I has never done any harm to the human bean so why should he be eating me?'"⁶⁴

Even giants' appetites appear more moderate than the war machine (human beans killing each other) and factory farming (the little piggy-wiggies).

These two approaches to the global-industrial food system – mapping it for child-consumers and occluding it in favor of pastoralism – persist in the present day. In *Eating the Alphabet* (1996) Lois Ehlert creates a sumptuous ABC book of richly colored, paper-cut produce. In *Growing Vegetable Soup* (2013), she connects the backyard garden and the kitchen table.⁶⁵ On the other end of the spectrum, Eric Schlosser and Charlie Wilson call their food industry exposé for children *Chew on This: Everything You Don't Want to Know About Fast Food* (2017). The conclusion directly addresses the child-reader as a potential reformer, in the simple act of eating (or not eating) a burger.⁶⁶

Contemporary children's literature also contends with globalization through food-themed picture books, inspired at least in part by the multicultural education movement of the 1980s. Many of these picture books express visceral discomfort about the perceived relationship between food and identity – either because of the possibility of disappointing a close-knit community or because of the fear of appearing strange to others. In Gary Soto's *Too Many Tamales* (1993), Maria tries on her mother's apron and wedding ring, only to lose the latter in the tamale fixings. When her mother leaves the room, Maria desperately enlists her cousins to help her eat the whole heaping platter of tamales. They gobble them up – just in time to learn that Mama was wearing the ring all along.⁶⁷ In Rosemary Wells's *Yoko* (1998), a chorus of cruel comments greets the lunch Yoko's mother packed: "Red bean ice cream is for weirdos!" Timothy the raccoon overcomes his hesitation and discovers that he loves Yoko's lunch. In Grace Lin's *Ugly Vegetables* (2001), the narrator fears that their plants "look different" from their neighbors' flower beds. The vegetables' "icky yellow" skin evokes Asian stereotype. To the narrator's surprise and pleasure neighbors love her mother's "ugly vegetables," borrowing seeds to plant their own gardens next year. The narrator learns to see her mother's garden – and by extension her Chinese background – from a new perspective.

In a recent Australian picture book, *Greenling* (2015), Levi Pinfold addresses globalization and the legacy of colonialism through the posthuman potential of human-vegetal entanglement.⁶⁸ In this gorgeously illustrated fable, the Barleycorns discover a green infant growing in the center of a giant flower on their land. The elderly couple is phenotypically white, drawn, and wan, and their world is drained of color – like Kansas before Oz’s technicolor. The British ballad of “John Barleycorn” personifies the barley plant, his burial in winter, and his resurrection in spring.⁶⁹ Apparently, the Barleycorns are the descendants of colonizers, grain cultivators, and property owners. In spite of these antecedents of monoculture and mastery, the “wild” Greenling’s needs elicit their care: “It’s clear he has needs only trees understand, / a vegetable hunger to feed.” Mr. Barleycorn brings dirt into their house to feed him, cradling him in what looks like a compost pile.

Swelling melons, colorful chilis, and twining vines spring up in their home overnight. This luxuriant growth chokes their phone lines and immobilizes their cars and even a commuter train. The passengers, forced to stop, reflect a range of racial phenotypes and clothing styles – one woman seems to wear a hijab. Everyone feasts on the fruit: “Strange and enchanted Greenling cuisine / has everyone filled with delight.” Though the fruit is “much too good to be true” and the Greenling disappears when summer ends, Pinfold’s conclusion honors the agency of the ecology: “What do the hills and the trees have planned? Does Mr. Barleycorn quite understand?” Through the Greenling as plant-human hybrid, Pinfold rejects the hierarchy of the food chain and imagines new, decolonizing assemblages.⁷⁰ The child as an engine of hunger and growth might model the enmeshment that adulthood denies.

Notes

1. Carolyn Daniel, *Voracious Children: Who Eats Whom in Children's Literature* (New York: Routledge, 2009); Susan Honeyman, *Consuming Agency in Fairy Tales, Childlore, and Folkliterature* (New York: Routledge, 2010); Kara K. Keeling and Scott T. Pollard, *Critical Approaches to Food in Children's Literature* (New York: Routledge, 2011).
2. Sigmund Freud, *The Freud Reader*, ed. Peter Gay (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1995), 273.
3. Lewis Carroll and Helen Oxenbury, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press, 2003), 20.
4. Carroll and Oxenbury, *Alice's Adventures*, 20. Gillian Beer memorably calls this catalog “a gallimaufry of flavors just this delicious side of disgusting.” Gillian Beer,

- Alice in Space: The Sideways Victorian World of Lewis Carroll* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), 226.
5. "Bananas!," Nadia Berenstein, accessed December 14, 2017, <http://nadiaberstein.com/blog/2016/2/15/bananas>.
 6. Rebecca Stern notes: "Throughout and 1850s and 1860s the number of people who ate ostensibly nutritious food, only to wither and die in consequence, provoked both governmental and popular alarm. Food poisoning was no longer a rare occurrence, and the story of a young girl eating beautiful food only to sicken unto death was not so unusual as one might imagine." Stern, "'Adulterations Detected': Food and Fraud in Christina Rossetti's 'Goblin Market,'" *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 57.477-511 (March 2003), 482.
 7. See Nancy Armstrong, "Sexuality in the Age of Racism: Hungry Alice," in *Fiction in the Age of Photography* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002); Nina Auerbach, "Alice and Wonderland: A Curious Child," *Victorian Studies* 17.1 (1973), 31-47; and Charlotte Boyce and Joan Fitzpatrick, *A History of Food in Literature: From the Fourteenth Century to the Present* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 232-5.
 8. See Tompkins on the trope of the edible black child. Kyla Wazana Tompkins, *Racial Indigestion: Eating Bodies in the 19th Century* (New York; London: New York University Press, 2012), 93-101.
 9. Kyla Wazana Tompkins, "'Hearty and Happy and with a Lively, Yeasty Soul': Feeling Right in Louisa May Alcott's *The Candy Country*," *Women & Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory* 24.2-3 (July 2014), 158.
 10. Louisa May Alcott, *The Candy Country* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1900), 18.
 11. Ibid., 24.
 12. Tompkins, "Hearty and Happy," 162.
 13. Katherine Capshaw Smith, "A Cross-Written Harlem Renaissance: Langston Hughes's *The Dream Keeper*," in *The Oxford Handbook of Children's Literature*, ed. Julia L. Mickenberg and Lynne Vallone (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2011), 132-3.
 14. Paul Laurence Dunbar, Bertha Rodgers, and Erick Berry, *Little Brown Baby* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co, 1940), 3.
 15. Dunbar, Rodgers, and Berry, *Little Brown Baby*, 3.
 16. April Merleaux, *Sugar and Civilization: American Empire and the Cultural Politics of Sweetness* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 75.
 17. Daniel, *Voracious Children*, 27.
 18. P. L. Travers, *Mary Poppins* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1962), 12. Hereafter citations found parenthetically in the text.
 19. P. L. Travers, *Mary Poppins Comes Back* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2006), 110.
 20. See Scott Pollard and Kara Keeling, "In Search of His Father's Garden," in *Beatrix Potter's Peter Rabbit: A Children's Classic at 100*, ed. Margaret Mackey (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 2002), 117-30.
 21. L. M. Montgomery, *The Annotated Anne of Green Gables* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 186. On *Anne of Green Gables*, Irishness, and the temperance movement, see Irene Gammel, *Looking for Anne of Green Gables: The Story of L. M. Montgomery and Her Literary Classic* (Macmillan, 2008), 131-2, 216-17.

22. Ibid., 182.
23. See Rachel Towns, “‘Turkish Delights and Sardines with Tea’: Food as a Framework for Exploring Nationalism, Gender, and Religion in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*” in *C.S. Lewis: The Chronicles of Narnia*, ed. Michelle Ann Abate and Lance Weldy (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 15–37.
24. C. S. Lewis, *Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe: A Celebration of the First Edition*, Reprint edition (Zondervan, 2009), 73–4.
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27. Marcie Cohen Ferris, *The Edible South: The Power of Food and the Making of an American Region* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press Books, 2014), 185.
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34. Mary Norton, *The Borrowers* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1981), 73.
35. Patricia Pace, “The Body-in-Writing: Miniatures in Mary Norton’s *Borrowers*,” *Text and Performance Quarterly* 11.4 (October 1991): 279–90. Chris Hopkins, “Arrietty, Homily, Pod: Home, Size, Gender, and Relativity in *The Borrowers*,” *Children’s Literature Association Quarterly* 25. 1 (January 2009), 24.
36. In her classic cookbook filled with advice about how to dine pleasurable in spite of wartime scarcity, Fisher recommends “an enormous salad . . . That is all you need, if there is enough of it.” M. F. K. Fisher, *How to Cook a Wolf* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1954), 9.
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38. E. B. White, *Charlotte’s Web* (New York: Harper Collins, 2017), 148.
39. Marah Gubar, “Species Trouble: The Abjection of Adolescence in E. B. White’s *Stuart Little*,” *The Lion and the Unicorn* 27.1 (March 2003), 109–11.
40. White, *Charlotte’s Web*, 43.
41. Leona W. Fisher, “Nancy Drew and the ‘F’ Word,” in Keeling and Pollard, *Critical Approaches to Food in Children’s Literature*, 82–5.
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43. A. A. Milne, *The House at Pooh Corner* (New York: Dutton’s Children’s Books, 1988).

44. Susan Honeyman, "Gingerbread Wishes and Candy(Land) Dreams: The Lure of Food in Cautionary Tales of Consumption," *Marvels & Tales: Journal of Fairy-Tale Studies* 21.2 (2007), 204.
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52. Eric Carle, *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* (New York: Philomel Books, 1994).
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54. Eric Carle, *The Art of Eric Carle* (New York: Philomel Books, 2002), 27.
55. Nathalie Op de Beeck, *Suspended Animation: Children's Picture Books and the Fairy Tale of Modernity* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 124.
56. Caroline Fraser, *Prairie Fires: The American Dreams of Laura Ingalls Wilder* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2017), 224.
57. Mrs. A J. Wilder, "The Small Farm Home," Missouri State Board of Agriculture, Annual Report, 1911, 255, 253.
58. Laura Ingalls Wilder, *Little House in the Big Woods* (New York: Harper & Row, 1953), 121.
59. Roald Dahl, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (New York: Knopf, 1964), 73.
60. See Clare Bradford, "The End of Empire? Colonial and Postcolonial Journeys in Children's Books," *Children's Literature* 29.1 (2001), 196–218 and Philip Nel, *Was the Cat in the Hat Black?* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 86–7.
61. Honeyman, *Consuming Agency*, 74.
62. Op de Beeck, *Suspended Animation*, 124.
63. Roald Dahl, *The BFG* (New York: Penguin Books, 1982), 8.
64. Ibid., 78–9.
65. Lois Ehlert, *Eating the Alphabet* (New York: Harcourt, 2017); *Growing Vegetable Soup* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013). Ehlert "takes white paper and paints it to get the exact color she wants for her illustrations. She then cuts out individual pieces of the colored paper and glues them to create her collages ... In *Eating the Alphabet*, each kernel of Indian corn is affixed to a separate piece of paper." David Yellin, *Sharing the Journey: Literature for Young Children* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 80.

66. Eric Schlosser and Charles Wilson, *Chew on This: Everything You Don't Want to Know about Fast Food* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 2006), 256.
67. See Genny Ballard's astute analysis of *Too Many Tamales* in Keeling and Pollard, *Critical Approaches to Food in Children's Literature*, 173–4.
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69. Robert Burns, *The Poems and Songs of Robert Burns* (London: J.M. Dent & Company, 1910), 263–5.
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II

PARAMA ROY

Postcolonial Tastes

While literary studies has come to develop a focus on taste, consumption, eating, and disgust in recent decades, the critical encounter of postcolonial studies with food studies has been a somewhat belated one. This is despite the fact that matters of cultivation, cuisine, and alimentary carnality constitute the very marrow of the material, aesthetic, and ethical cultures of empire and of post-coloniality; no history of modern empire can be thought without passing through the mouth, or through the question of consumption in general, whether vectored through the alimentary tract or through other organs of ingestion, including lungs, nose, and skin. In this respect there is a striking discrepancy that subsists between the domain of literary scholarship and that of literary production. Writers have tended to draw freely upon an expansive alimentary epistemology – one that encompasses food, consumption, refusal, and deprivation – to their delineation of the ways in which colonial and postcolonial subjects negotiate experiences of dailiness as well as of world-historical significance. Hence the abundance in postcolonial literature of food-centered memoirs, from Sara Suleri's *Meatless Days* (1989) to Wole Soyinka's *Aké: The Years of Childhood* (1981), as well as fiction, film, and discursive prose that limn the experience of imperialism, indenture, postcoloniality, and diaspora in terms of a gustatory and commensal schema. Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981), Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* (1988), Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1996), Monique Truong's *The Book of Salt* (2003), Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2003), and Chris Abani's *GraceLand* (2004) are but a few of the titles that speak to the powerfully generative place of a gustatory and alimentary thematics in postcolonial writing.

Postcolonial literary critics have been wary of examining the conceptual possibilities of this gustatory turn, partly because taste has conventionally been ranked low in the hierarchy of the senses by philosophers (olfaction, its sensory supplement, has a similarly degraded status) and partly out of a certain wariness about the temptations of self-exoticization or unreflexive

nostalgia that are seen as inseparable from the gastronomic self-representation of minoritized subjects. Perhaps as a result of these anxieties, postcolonial literary scholars too often have tended to cede the study of appetite, taste, and consumption in the diaspora to disciplines – anthropology and sociology in particular – more overtly hospitable to an analysis of everyday practice and the material culture of food and less directly bound by considerations of aesthetic value. This, however, is changing, and increasingly literary scholars of the postcolonial have directed our attention to the improvisatory and imaginative work that alimentary fictions undertake. This has the effect of augmenting the archive of postcolonial literature. Besides, such an endeavor lets us defamiliarize certain well-known postcolonial literary texts by training the lens of food studies upon them; it furnishes a portal for thinking in expansive, supple, and sometimes counter-intuitive ways about what postcolonial taste might involve.

The Colonial Mouth

The first sweetened cup of hot tea to be drunk by an English worker was a significant historical event.

(Sidney Mintz, *Sweetness and Power*)¹

The voyages of Christopher Columbus in 1492 and of Vasco da Gama in 1498 have been described by Adam Smith as “the two greatest and most important events recorded in the history of mankind.”² These achievements of navigation and “discovery” built upon the advances in logs, compasses, sea charts, cartography, and celestial navigation that led to the discovery in the fifteenth century of new sources of gold, grains of paradise, and slaves in sub-Saharan Africa and new maritime routes off that continent’s west coast. These voyages came also to be the engine for the gradual emergence of a wealthy, powerful, and globe-girdling Europe.³ This change in the balance of world power was marked both by fierce competition outside Europe among new imperial powers for colonies or spheres of influence and increasing prosperity within the continent. For Smith the new wealth of early modern Europe was the fruit of these voyages: “Since the discovery of America, the greater part of Europe has been much improved. England, Holland, France, and Germany; even Sweden, Denmark, and Russia have all advanced considerably both in agriculture and manufactures.”⁴

What, however, propelled these risky and expensive voyages in the first instance? Early European exploration across uncharted seas was driven by dreams of inordinate profit, to be realized through direct access to valuable commodities such as spices, precious metals and, later, textiles. But their

hard-won technological advances in navigation and cartography did not in themselves make such ventures inevitable. In a criticism of a received narrative of global exploration that showcases European exceptionalism, Paul Freedman notes that the states that constituted Latin Christendom were not the undisputed maritime powers in the fifteenth century; the large armadas – larger by far than the fleets commanded by Columbus or da Gama – and far-flung voyages undertaken by the Chinese admiral Zheng He early in the century suggest the contrary. Yet, despite Chinese interest in the same exotic perfumes and spices that captured the medieval European imagination, the Ming court that had financed his voyages was willing to purchase its spices on the global market and made no bid to control the trade.⁵

For European mariners, explorers, and their investors and patrons, these maritime and commercial ventures were the result of an imaginative investment in and a gustatory hunger for various foods and stimulants of the tropics, especially spices like pepper, ginger, galangal, cinnamon, saffron, nutmeg, mace, cloves, and grains of paradise (as well as sugar, classified as a spice, along with resins like frankincense and myrrh and animal secretions like ambergris and musk). Before Marco Polo's account of his travels was published (and credited), medieval Europe had a geographically imprecise sense of where India, the fabled source of the aromatic commodities it coveted, was; "although certainly indicating from European antiquity a loosely defined region of Asia somewhere between the Levant and China, 'India' equally marked the site of a series of allegorical operations, which impressed upon an ill-defined space an imagined content," says Shankar Raman.⁶ But the lure of its spices was sufficient to launch ships from the Atlantic rim of the Iberian peninsula on long, risky sea voyages across uncharted territory. As Salman Rushdie's protagonist (and scion of spice merchants) in *The Moor's Last Sigh* (1997) puts it, "If it had not been for peppercorns, then what is ending now in East and West might never have begun . . . we were 'not so much sub-continent as sub-condiment', as my distinguished mother had it."⁷

It is true that authors of commodity histories, especially of the non-academic variety, have tended to hyperbolize the significance of their favored substances or commodities as engines of world history. But, as most scholars of world history concede, the trade in spices (and other luxury goods) did in fact have a large impact on the society and economic destiny of medieval and early modern Europe – and, of course, those regions of the world that came to be the objects of its voyaging and exploration.⁸ Wolfgang Schivelbusch is perhaps the most forceful of these in arguing for the centrality of "Genussmittel" – the "spices, stimulants, or other substances ingested or inhaled by humans to produce a pleasurable effect," quite apart from any

functionalist, that is to say nutritive or medical value – in ushering the modern world into being. The quest for these had the effect of catalyzing the passage of Europe from the medieval epoch to a modern one of overseas imperialism, an economy based on monopolist practice and protectionism, mass commodity production, transatlantic chattel slavery, and mass consumption of “new” colonial products, including sugar, tea, coffee, tobacco, and cotton.⁹ Certainly Luís Vaz de Camões, author of *The Lusiads* (1571), and epic eulogist of da Gama’s voyage to and military success in India, would have concurred; for him, the opening of the sea route to the subcontinent was an epic achievement in a cosmic drama featuring pagan gods, Christian forces, and heroic Portuguese men.

Spice-besottedness is the hallmark of the story that Freedman, Schivelbusch, and others tell of medieval Europe. Spices had a critical place in the cuisine and the pharmacology of the aristocracy and the higher ranks of the bourgeoisie (and, to some degree, even in lower social strata). The period was marked by a decided appetite for strong flavors and complex tastes. At the same time spices were luxury goods, enjoying a status akin to that of silks and furs. They formed a pivotal part of a medieval culinary and especially banqueting culture of display, striking combinations, ornament, and whimsicality. They were also widely used for therapeutic purposes, harmonizing the body’s humors and neutralizing through their hot and dry properties the moist or cold character of many kinds of meat and fish. They had manifold other uses as cosmetics, aphrodisiacs, contraceptives, and embalming agents. But arguably their glamour derived in very large part from their status as aromatics, given the widespread association of perfume with sanctity or divine presence. The literalization of the odor of sanctity meant that olfaction had a sensual as well as a spiritually transcendent dimension. Freedman suggests that spices were associated with the scents of paradise, which was believed to be located in a remote, enigmatic, sumptuous East. Their allure therefore was indissolubly linked to their connection to eastern lands that, being proximate to paradise, were imagined to be an ever-fecund resource for wonderful and valuable objects like spices and gemstones. It was this fantasy, grounded in ignorance and frankly absurd optimism, about the existence of eastern cornucopias defined by “wild plenitude” that provided the needed impetus for undertakings such as those of Columbus and da Gama.¹⁰ As Freedman notes shrewdly, “The marvelous is more important than the scientific in the initial and most risky stages of innovation. Business histories tend to emphasize technological or conceptual, ‘paradigm-shifting’ breakthroughs, but it is the crazes, fads, and marvels that seize the imagination, including that of investors and those who undertake physical and financial risks.”¹¹

If imaginative and corporeal investments in taste, digestion, and olfaction constituted the impetus for da Gama's momentous voyages east, they were no less decisive in the voyages to the Americas. Spices and the spice trade were as much at the heart of Columbus's undertaking as they had been in the case of the Portuguese captain. His endeavor too was to find a sea route to India, though by sailing by the western Atlantic rather than by circumnavigating the Cape of Good Hope – a possibility encouraged by the recently rediscovered Ptolemaic cartography of the world – in order to break the monopoly of extant spice middlemen. (He hoped also to find gold.) Once in the New World, he was certain he had found a number of spices and aromatics – mastic, ginger, cinnamon, nutmeg, aloes, and so on. So powerful was this expectation that it incited a myth of La Canela, the Valley of Cinnamon, that paralleled the myth of El Dorado. Andrew Dalby tells the story of a long, brutal, and ruinously expensive expedition led by Gonzalo Pizarro to discover this fabulous territory.¹²

While Columbus and his successors in the Americas were unable to locate the spices they yearned for, the New World became the locus for the production of sugar, a once rare and precious commodity classified with spices, on a scale hitherto unimaginable. Columbus carried sugarcane grass to Hispaniola on his second voyage. More ambitiously, the Portuguese took sugarcane – cultivated since the fifteenth century on the Atlantic islands of Madeira, São Tomé, and the Canaries with a mixture of free and African slave labor – and transplanted it to Brazil. Here, the indigenes were displaced from their lands so that these could be cleared for cultivation, and an extraordinary numbers of African slaves transported across the Atlantic in the service of sugar production. Sugar quickly became Brazil's major export, finding markets in an increasingly saccharophilic Europe and North America. British and French settlements in the Caribbean would soon imitate this slave-based system of producing cash crops on a massive scale for sale in a global market. As many as eighty percent of the eleven or twelve million slaves transported to the Americas were sent to the sugar plantation regions of Brazil and the Caribbean.

The cultivation of sugar transformed the ecology of Brazil and the Caribbean, as well as of other places (Mauritius, Fiji, Natal, the Orange Free State, and the Hawaiian islands) where plantations were established over the centuries. It also wrought extraordinary demographic changes, as the long-distance movement of enslaved Africans was followed, after the official abolition of slavery, by the intercontinental movements of indentured labor – on decommissioned slave ships to begin with – from Java, China, the Philippines, Japan, and the Indian subcontinent. It had, besides, as Sidney Mintz has described with unparalleled virtuosity, remarkable implications

for diet and taste in the metropolis, especially in the lives of the newly emerging industrial proletariat. “The region stands out in world history because it was the first place, ever, that adventurers from empires stretching across oceans, both east and west beyond Eurasia, could set out to produce food, far from Europe itself, which they would then peddle back home, with huge success,” he remarks.¹³ The capacity to command food from distant parts of the globe would constitute a distinctive feature of the British Empire.¹⁴

Increasing saccharine supremacy coincided with a declension in the importance of spices in the European diet and the development of diets high in sugar, oils, and meat; sugar thus displaced spices as a paradigmatic commodity in the development of global capitalism.¹⁵ Sugar production on a quasi-industrial scale transformed what had been the luxury item of the wealthy into a commonplace and increasingly large component of the British diet. New tastes for Chinese (and later Indian) tea, Yemeni (and later Javanese and West Indian) coffee, and American chocolate animated the demand for sugar. Combined with tea (and milk), it came to constitute the national beverage of Britain, replacing beer, and conjoining a product of the Indian ocean region (tea-growing in India was a British monopoly), and the Atlantic (where for at least two centuries sugar and its by-products enjoyed a protected trade status). The ritualized drinking of chocolate and sugared tea, especially by aristocratic and bourgeois women, had an important role in the embodied display of the civilizing of appetite in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In tandem with this, the coffee house emerged as the locus of a masculine and bourgeois public sphere in Europe.¹⁶ But the consumption of these substances would soon become even more pervasive, coming eventually to constitute a significant percentage of the diet of poor laborers, who had decreasing access to foods like milk, butter, cheese, fresh meat, and vegetables.¹⁷ As Mintz notes acerbically, “sugar and other drug foods [like tobacco, tea, and coffee], by provisioning, sating – and, indeed, drugging farm and factory workers, sharply reduced the overall cost of creating and reproducing the metropolitan proletariat.”¹⁸

Sugar was not, of course, the only consequential food product of the empire that transformed eating and mealtimes across the world. Coffee, tea, tobacco, chocolate, rum, and potatoes became increasingly available to Britons of all classes; by the eighteenth century edibles made up much of the value of Britain’s imperial trade.¹⁹ These products and others – sweet potatoes, tomatoes, maize, peanuts, chili peppers, squashes, cashews, pineapples, papayas, several kinds of beans, guavas, avocados, passion fruit, vanilla, cacao, and tapioca – also altered tastes and diets elsewhere. We know quite well how instrumental potatoes and tomatoes were in metamorphosing the

cuisines of Ireland and Italy. But other parts of the globe saw similar transformations of agriculture and alimentation. Sucheta Mazumdar describes the early adoption of sweet potatoes, maize, and peanuts as staples in China, and the somewhat more belated but nonetheless thoroughgoing adoption of American food crops like peanuts, chili peppers, and white potatoes by Indian peasants.²⁰ In West Africa, too, imported American foods like maize and manioc (cassava) replaced millet and sorghum. Maize, which could be grown quickly and stored easily, became the food of slaves on the Middle Passage.²¹

In Britain, votaries of the consumption of West Indian sugar insisted on its status as a biological necessity. In producing a poetics of sugar they produced a fantasy of Caribbean sweetness and fecundity from which the labor and suffering of slaves was expunged.²² This sense of the consumable character of the Caribbean was also mobilized, though in the mode of an aversive reversal, by abolitionists – many of them women – in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In consuming a sugar permeated by the blood, sweat, tears, and even flesh of its slave producers – “No nostrum, planters say, is half so good/to make fine sugar, as a Negro’s blood,” quipped William Cowper, bitingly – British planters and consumers seemingly proved themselves practitioners of the cannibalism conventionally attributed to the denizens of the Caribbean.²³ The invocation of what Timothy Morton has named a blood-sugar *topos* served to catalyze two kinds of affect simultaneously – a sentimental identification of the African as a fellow human whose sufferings aroused identification and compassion, to be sure, but also a disgust about ingesting the tabooed effusions of the slave body.²⁴

Hunger and Famine

The settler’s town is a well-fed town, an easy-going town; its belly is always full of good things. The settler’s town is a town of white people, of foreigners . . . The native town is a hungry town, starved of bread, of meat, of shoes, of coal, of light . . . It is a town of niggers and dirty Arabs.

(Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 39)

For the largely landless people in the Americas who toiled at the profitable and increasingly desirable crops, plantation products were meant for distant others; they were not dedicated to feeding locals. Asymmetries, geographical and social, between production and consumption constituted the hallmark of the colonial order.²⁵ The initial profitability of sugar resulted in practically all available land being devoted to its monoculture, while slaves were fed on imported grain and dried meats and fish, often of poor

quality, from the British Isles and the North American colonies. When sugar prices dipped, planters sought to realize efficiencies by cutting back on slave rations and letting slaves grow some of their own food on rocky mountain slopes far from the plantations, and raise small livestock. Slaves were also expected in some instances to supplement their scanty rations through fishing, trapping, and hunting small game. Despite the poor quality of the land and the limited time at the slaves' disposal, those who grew their own food fared better than those fed entirely by slave owners. Though imperial codes sought to mandate adequate if monotonous rations for slaves, in practice they received a fraction of what they were legally allowed, and much of it spoiled. Even the officially mandated amounts were nutritionally deficient, lacking vitamins, minerals, and usable protein. Endemic hunger, malnutrition, and weakened immune systems thus rendered slaves prey to a host of diseases.²⁶

In the United States, the color line was inseparable from an alimentary one. In *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855) Frederick Douglass recalls having to compete with domestic animals for the barest sustenance during his childhood as a slave: "I have often been so pinched with hunger, that I have fought with the dog – 'Old Nep' – for the smallest crumbs that fell from the kitchen table, and have been glad when I won a single crumb in the combat. Many times have I followed, with eager step, the waiting girl when she went out to shake the table cloth, to get the crumbs and small bones flung out for the cats."²⁷ Later in the century, in *The Conjure Woman and Other Conjure Tales*, Charles Chesnutt would present slave suffering through accounts of the quest by slaves to find food – and, occasionally, non-food items that they could ingest, such as clay in "Lonesome Ben" – in a situation of endemic semi-starvation.²⁸

Even in Jamaica, where slaves were permitted to grow their provisions, many were driven to begging and stealing to sustain themselves.²⁹ The stealing of food or drink was punished with striking brutality everywhere. Olaudah Equiano describes his first encounter with the iron muzzle, used to gag a female slave cooking dinner at a plantation house in Virginia: "the poor creature was cruelly loaded with various kinds of iron machines; she had one particularly on her head, which locked her mouth so fast that she could scarcely speak; and could not eat nor drink."³⁰ The creole plantation owners of the eighteenth century, on the other hand, were notorious for their excessive consumption of food and drink.³¹ It is worth noting that abolition, and the passage from slavery to the status of landless subject of colonialism, did not do away with the ex-slave's experience of alimentary deprivation. As Fanon notes, the production of the hunger of the native was not epiphenomenal to colonialism but part of a fundamental structural process at work.

This was as true in Britain's sole European colony as in less proximate ones. By the early part of the eighteenth century, the potato had come increasingly to displace milk, butter, and grain in the diet of the Irish poor. Calorically dense, nutritious, and easy to grow, it had come within a century to constitute the primary food of poor tenant farmers. The potato's capacity to thrive in poor soil made it the recourse of farmers who struggled to provide for themselves at a subsistence level while growing cereals and raising cattle for a consumer base in Britain. This dependence on the potato, combined with the fact that only one high-yielding strain was grown in Ireland, meant that the appearance of a potato blight in 1845 wiped out the entire crop that year, and every year through 1849, and plunged Ireland into Europe's worst famine of the nineteenth century.

The response of the British state was – not to put too fine a point upon it – far from adequate. The Prime Minister Sir Robert Peel arranged for some relief by way of maize and cornmeal imported from the United States, but his successor, Lord John Russell, adopted a *laissez-faire* attitude to Irish starvation. He outsourced the responsibility for meeting the needs of the Irish peasantry to Irish landlords and British absentee landlords, in consequence of which large numbers of tenant farmers and laborers were evicted from their land. Believing that the market would correct the problem, the government refused to stop the export of food out of Ireland. Large quantities of livestock, meats, butter, peas, beans, fish, oysters, and honey were shipped to destinations in England and Scotland throughout the course of the famine. Public works projects demanded poorly compensated and hard physical labor of the starving and added to their mortality rates. Recipients of relief were often required to travel miles to receive assistance, and occasionally perished on the way. Government officials such as the Evangelical Charles Trevelyan, who was in charge of the administration of government policy, saw the famine as an opportunity to modernize an Ireland that had shown itself recalcitrant to capitalist agriculture and to birth rates congruent with Malthusian doctrine. For him and like-minded others, the famine was a God-given opportunity for reform: “the cure has been applied by the stroke of an all-wise Providence in a manner as unexpected and unthought of as it is likely to be effectual. God grant that we may rightly perform our part and not turn into a curse what was intended for a blessing.”³² In one respect at least his hopes for the famine were met: Over a million people (out of a population of eight million) perished, a greater number emigrated over a six-year period, and Ireland's population continued to decline after the return of good harvests.

In *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger* (1995), Terry Eagleton claimed that the Great Famine past had been largely neglected in the Irish canon, being

represented by just “a handful of novels and a body of poems.”³³ Such a claim has been undercut persuasively by a host of critical studies that have examined representations of the Famine in the poetry and fiction of the nineteenth century, most notably by writers like William Carleton (*The Black Prophet* [1847]), Anthony Trollope (*Castle Richmond* [1860]), and James Clarence Mangan (“The Song of the Albanian” [1847], “A Voice of Encouragement” [1848], “For Soul and Country” [1849], “Bear Up” [1849], “Siberia” and “A Vision: A. D. 1848,” among others). Other scholars have drawn attention to the journals, travel narratives, and diaries, mostly by non-Irish writers, of the period of the Famine. These include writings by the Irish John Mitchel (*Jail Journal* [1854]), Thomas Carlyle (*Reminiscences of My Irish Journey in 1849* [1882]), Asenath Nicholson (*Annals of the Famine in Ireland* [1851]), Sydney Godolphin Osborne (*Gleanings in the West of Ireland*, 1850), Alexander Somerville (*Letters from Ireland during the Famine of 1847* [1847]), and William Henry Smith (*A Twelve Months’ Residence in Ireland, during the Famine and the Public Works, 1846 and 1847* [1848]). Yet other scholars have noted the ways in which canonical Irish literary texts (by John Millington Synge, Bram Stoker, W. B. Yeats, James Joyce, and Samuel Beckett) recall the Famine past, either directly or implicitly.³⁴ And, as texts as various as Liam O’Flaherty’s *Famine* (1937), Eavan Boland’s “The Famine Road” (1975) and *In a Time of Violence* (1994), and Paul Lynch’s *Grace* (2017) remind us, the Great Hunger continues to animate the writing of Irish postcoloniality.

In more distant parts of the empire, especially in India, famine was one of the notorious features of colonial rule, British rule there being book-ended by two notable instances – the Bengal Famine of 1769–70 and that of 1943–4. Historians, economists, and early Indian nationalists began to pay marked attention in the last decades of the nineteenth century to the profound failures of the colonial state in providing famine relief as well as in begetting the conditions (rigid taxation, neglect of irrigation, prevention of industrialization, and the privileging of landlord and moneylender interests over those of peasants) that produced famine conditions in the first place. They noted that the Bengal famine of 1770, which saw a loss of ten million lives and significant depopulation of severely affected areas, saw an increase in tax revenue in 1771, in the immediate aftermath of the famine year, because of the intense pressures to maximize Company profits.³⁵ Formulating his “drain theory” in the aftermath of the devastating Orissa famine of 1866–7, the statesman and statistician Dadabhai Naoroji saw the extraction of Indian wealth as the devastatingly high price for a British rule that, as a loyalist of the empire and one of the party of “moderate Indian nationalists,” he found otherwise admirable: “Security of life and property we have better in these times, no doubt, but

the destruction of a million and a half lives in one famine is a strange illustration of the worth of the life and property thus secured.”³⁶

Naoroji, who first ran for a seat in the British parliament on an Irish Home Rule ticket, was well acquainted with the absentee landlord situation in Ireland as a source of its immiseration, and his drain theory of Indian poverty was, as Sukanya Banerjee points out, closely related to it. In his 1895 testimony to the Welby Commission on Indian expenditures, he quoted Sir William Wilson Hunter, statistician and historian of the Bengal famine of 1770: “forty years hereafter we should have had an Indian Ireland multiplied fifty-fold on our hands.”³⁷

The civil servant, economic historian, and literary man Romesh Chunder Dutt concurred with this diagnosis of Indian poverty, avowing that excessive land taxes, excessive spending on the imperial army in India, neglect of irrigation, and the forced commercialization of agriculture under colonial rule had exacerbated the parlous state of the peasantry in India, for whom “every year of drought was a year of famine.”³⁸ As a result of official exactions, there had been ten famines between 1860 and 1800, with a total death toll of fifteen million. These famines, he insisted, were not the predictable misfortunes of a poor and over-populated agrarian society, but “unexampled in their extent and intensity in the history of ancient or modern times.” This, he said, was the result of a policy of extraction and lack of democratic representation – of her British governors looking upon India as “a vast estate or plantation, the profits of which were to be withdrawn from India and deposited in Europe.”³⁹

It is scarcely a coincidence that the signature work of Amartya Sen, post-colonial India’s sole Nobel Prize-winning economist, is on the relationship between famine vulnerability and powerful social inequalities, which he describes as class- and gender-stratified “entitlements.” Sen’s well-known work on the Bengal famine of 1943–4, which claimed three million lives, establishes decisively the human agency of famine: Famine starvation results not from decisive food scarcity but from the inability of the starving to make claims upon the state or the market for sustenance. During this famine, a “rice denial” scheme of the imperial state forced cultivators to sell tens of thousands of tons of grain to the government for the purpose of supplying the military and the industrial workers who were essential to the war effort, an act that caused panics, hoarding, and price rises that put rice out of reach of the poor. The provincial government in Calcutta proved entirely unequal to the challenge of the famine, while the imperial government at Delhi maintained a stance of rebarbative indifference. (Meanwhile, in a Whitehall exasperated by the increasing militancy of Indian nationalism, Churchill accused the Bengalis of having invited disaster by breeding “like rabbits.”) For Sen, famine

is a dramatic example of the moral failure of non-democratic dispensations; in this respect he can be seen as an heir to Dutt's denunciation of the necropolitical entailments of a non-representative imperial rule.

The Bengal famine of 1943–4 yielded an ironically rich harvest of Bengalophone and Anglophone fiction, poetry, theatre, ethnography, song, and film, in addition to art and photography that sought to document the traumas of the alimentary catastrophe that was unfolding in the context of a world war, peasant movements, and anti-colonial struggle. “It would be hard,” says Nikhil Sarkar, “to find a writer in Bengali from those times who had not written a story against the setting of the famine.”⁴⁰ Among the best known of these are Bengali novels and short fiction by Tarashankar Bandyopadhyay (*Manavantar [Epoch's End]* 1944), Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay (*Ashani Sanket [Distant Thunder]*, 1959), Sulekha Sanyal (*Nabankur [The Seedling]*, 1956), and Manik Bandyopadhyay (“Aaj Kaal Porshur Golpo” [“A Tale of These Days”], 1963), Sukanta Bhattacharya’s famine poetry (*Aakaal [Famine]*, 1944), and the English-language fiction of Bhabani Bhattacharya (*So Many Hungers!* [1947] and *He Who Rides a Tiger* [1954]) and Ela Sen (*Darkening Days* [1944]). Some of this work involved an overhaul of existing literary and theatrical conventions, especially bourgeois ones. In particular, Bijon Bhattacharya’s play about the famine, *Nabanno (New Rice*, 1944), a key text in the formation of a radical theatre movement in India, employed a number of novel elements, from experimental stage production and non-professional rural actors to folk theatrical forms and regional dialects.

More recently and ambitiously, in his political ecology of the famines that devastated many parts of Asia, Latin America, and sub-Saharan Africa in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Mike Davis has braided together an emphasis on the production and unfolding of subsistence crises in world history with an environmentalist focus. The result illuminates the ways in which ecological changes work in concert with social and economic forces to produce significant historical transformations. He focuses on the three great global droughts (of 1876–9, 1889–91, and 1896–1900) that ravaged densely populated areas of the tropics, bringing in their wake death tolls of between thirty and sixty million people. The droughts were caused by the climatic event we know as El Niño, but the famines that followed cannot be explained as inevitable natural disasters exacerbated by population growth and backward traditions and social structures. Rather, Davis insists that the scope of the suffering generated by the famines can be traced to the heightened vulnerability of peasants dragooned by imperial officials into the cultivation of cash crops for a world market and the dismantling of grain reserves and other protectionist measures that predated imperial rule. The market

mechanisms and the modern infrastructure apparatus of the imperial state in the form of railways, telegraphs, and steamships failed emphatically to provide relief to the sufferers. Rather, they enabled the more efficient transport of foodstuffs from famine-affected areas to consumers in Europe; in the quarter century of India's repeated famines, grain exports rose more than threefold.

As in the case of Ireland during the Great Hunger, British authorities in India were driven by dogmas that were an amalgam of Malthusianism, *laissez-faire* economics, and Orientalist racism; famines were believed to be the fate of the unprogressive, teeming masses of a culturally retrograde Asia. Davis recounts how millions were sacrificed to the famine policy of a vice-regal establishment that resisted the most basic measures to relieve the starving, believing them to violate the laws of the market. Whatever relief was made available was designed to be both repugnant and difficult to access. In a repetition of a genocidal policy pioneered in Ireland, the starving seekers of relief were forced to travel long distances and supply manual labor in exchange for food rations that have been shown to be more meagre than those on offer at the Buchenwald death camp.

It was in these ways – through a conjugation of ecological, market-driven, and imperialist forces – that famines became “engines of social transformation,” giving a decisive shape to the impoverished societies that we know today as the Third World as well as to anticolonial movements.⁴¹ Davis describes a series of millenarian uprisings and more small-scale protests that followed the experience of famine in Brazil, the Philippines, southern Africa, and China. In the last decade his analysis has proved to have had a prophetic cast. The world food crisis of 2007–8, marked by sharply escalating food prices, speculative targeting of the futures markets in cattle and food crops, the dismantling of grain reserves, extreme weather events like drought and floods and heat, and competition for land for agrofuels and feed crops for livestock, was recognizable in many of its lineaments to the nineteenth-century events described in *Late Victorian Holocausts*. It led to widespread food riots across the globe, in Italy, Uzbekistan, Morocco, Guinea, Mauritania, Senegal, India, Indonesia, Zimbabwe, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Yemen, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Mexico, Argentina, and Haiti. The crisis forced President Préval of Haiti out of office and has been described by some as one of the proximate causes of the events of the Arab Spring.⁴² These developments are the most recent but nonetheless uncannily familiar instantiation of the nexus of forces that Davis describes. Like the famine-inspired uprisings of the southern hemisphere in the nineteenth century, and like the bread riots famously anatomized by E. P. Thompson, the food riots of the preceding decade constitute a challenge to the conditions of

market rationality that divide the world into “the stuffed and the starved,” to use Raj Patel’s terms, and a refusal to accept the status of bare life.⁴³

Postcolonial Digestion

Tupi or not tupi, that is the question.
(Oswald de Andrade, “Cannibalist Manifesto”)⁴⁴

Given the pervasiveness of hunger under conditions of slavery and colonialism, it is entirely fitting that alimentation has assumed a certain pre-eminence as an aesthetics and a politics in anti-colonial critique as well as in postcolonial literature and culture. In them hunger functions as the trace of violence both historical and urgent. Numerous writers, from India’s Mahasweta Devi (“Shishu [“Children”],” “Daini [“The Witch”],” and other stories) and Aravind Adiga (*The White Tiger* [2008]) to Nigeria’s Adichie (*Half of a Yellow Sun* [2006]) and Zimbabwe’s NoViolet Bulawayo (*We Need New Names* [2013]) and Dambudzo Marechera (*House of Hunger* [1978]) thematize a pervasive or deliberately induced starvation that mocks the welfarist or redistributive pretensions of the postcolonial state.⁴⁵

But hunger (or other forms of alimentary abstinence) can also be mobilized as a form of political expression or protest. The hunger strike simultaneously showcases heroic, disciplined individuals while underlining their status as representatives of the suffering of the larger national body; as such, the strike is a public performance, enacted before an audience and dependent upon wide dissemination of its intentions and performative effects. We see this most pre-eminently in the instance of Gandhi, who emulated hunger strikers in Tsarist Russia, British and Irish suffragettes, Irish republican prisoners in the 1916–23 period, and Kathiawadi practitioners of “sitting *dharna*” by foregoing food in order to protest injustices and to press political demands. In a period that was, to quote Tim Pratt and James Vernon, “the golden age of the hunger strike in anticolonial struggles,” he was the most notable fast of all, undertaking at least fifteen major fasts as well as innumerable fasts of restricted duration during the course of his lifetime.⁴⁶ His emaciated and scantily clad body in a state of fasting constituted an important part of the aesthetic of anti-colonial protest. We can see this in texts as discrepant in outlook as Mulk Raj Anand’s social reformist novel, *Untouchable* (1935), and the satirical cartoons of Ronald Niebour for the *Daily Mail* and of David Low for the *Evening Standard*.⁴⁷

A hunger striker such as Gandhi, at least in his capacity as principled antagonist to imperial rule, sought to mobilize the paradoxical power of his bodily vulnerability and finitude against the awesome power of the state.

Through the demonstration of self-suffering, he sought to vivify the injustices of the colonial experience as an irreducibly bodily agon; at the same time, willed abstinence from food also demonstrated a transcendence of the attachment to mere biological existence in favor of more urgent ethical and political convictions. For him, the public fasts were a complement to, and a scalar intensification of, the nonviolent dietary “experiments with truth” he practiced as part of a program of somatic and moral-spiritual perfectibilism.⁴⁸ It must be remembered, though, that if the virtuous non-eating of a Gandhi has something of a heroic and legibly anti-colonial dimension, the same is not necessarily true of female practitioners of food refusal. In Dangarembga’s *Nervous Conditions*, Nyasha’s alimentary abstinence and purging has a far more vexed relationship than the mahatma’s to imperialism and patriarchy; this is also the case for the protagonist in Lindsey Collen’s *There is a Tide* (1990).

A Gandhian technique of publicly performed self-suffering against the injustices of an unresponsive political or corporatist order – whether regional or international – has undergone a certain intensification since his death, involving more frequent deployment and coordination among multiple actors across a global canvas. (One notable exception to this large-scale deployment of the hunger strike is Iron Sharmila of northeastern India, who fasted – and was force-fed – for sixteen years to protest the atrocities committed by Indian paramilitary forces, and the legal impunity granted to them.) This technique is one that Banu Bargu has described as “the weaponization of life,” through which its practitioners “necropoliticize” their resistance in the form of hunger strikes, self-immolation, and other, more limited forms of self-injury.⁴⁹ Mass hunger strikes among prisoners, whether in South Africa, northern Ireland (the so-called dirty protest at the Maze prison that resulted in the deaths of Bobby Sands and several comrades), Israel/Palestine, China, or in Guantanamo Bay, have sought to deploy the public visibility and the visceral address of the suffering body in making their political claims. Of these, the hunger strikes at Guantanamo against indefinite detention and the denial of fundamental rights, have drawn the greatest attention. But similar mass protests have also occurred among refugees and asylum seekers held in detention centers in Australia, Greece, and other places. As Bargu observes, “military and civilian prisons, especially supermaximum security facilities, detention centers, and refugee camps, are fast converging in terms of their structural features, as well as the practices that govern them, troubling an easy separation of Guantánamo as the ‘exception’ from the otherwise legally, politically, socially acceptable norms reigning everywhere else.”⁵⁰

If the sincerity, outrage, and self-suffering of a politics (and aesthetics) of hunger is one of the vectors of protest in the aftermath of colonialism,

postcolonial writers have also had recourse to more ironic, excessive, and satirical uses of the alimentary script. African novelists such as Ayi Kwei Armah (*The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, 1968) and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (*The Devil on the Cross*, 1980) satirize the attachment of African "big men" or elites to excesses of consumption.⁵¹ In the Caribbean locale, writers and theorists such as Aimé Césaire, Suzanne Césaire, Maryse Condé, Edwidge Danticat, Andrea Levy, Patrick Chamoiseau, and Gisèle Pineau are distinguished for the ways in which they have appropriated the tropes of cannibalism to reflect upon the continuing legacy of their relationship to the global North. Some Brazilian writers and literary polemicists have done the same thing. Ever since Columbus' voyage to the Americas, the conceit of cannibalism has been crucial to an understanding of the history and culture of the Caribbean, Brazil, the South Pacific, and parts of sub-Saharan Africa. As is now well known, the word "cannibal" dates from Columbus's voyages to the Americas, and is a corruption of Carib Amerindians' self-naming, "caribá," as "caníbal," a term etymologically linked to the dog-headed man-eaters of classical lore and medieval travel narratives. Scholars have not failed to note the ideological and economic rewards of the mishearing/mis-translation that permitted the production of denizens of the Caribbean as figures of perverse, promiscuous, or nonhuman eating. Valerie Loichot and Njeri Githire have discussed the ways in which Caribbean writers have responded to the resonant motif of cannibalism through a variety of tropic reversals and cannibal counter-fictions that functions as indictments of the voracity of an all-consuming colonial (or neocolonial) order.⁵² This body of work speaks to the ways in which matters of devourment, digestion, hunger, desire, and disgust constitute much more than a thematics for this region of the world; they constitute in important ways the very grammar of existence (and resistance) under colonial and late capitalist underdevelopment.

Cannibalism can be for postcolonial writers a vehicle of incorporation and *poiesis* rather than accusation and oppression. If one aspect of critique involves identifying the colonizer (rather than the colonized) as cannibal, another finds alternative ways to wring creative use from the trope. Among the most famous (and witty) assimilations of the master trope of the colonial encounter in the Americas is Oswald de Andrade's surrealist *Manifesto Antropófago* (1928), which seeks a focus on the cannibal trope in the forging of a specifically Brazilian *modernismo*. Though the document resists any programmatic reduction, it is commonly (if selectively) read as a counter-intuitive deployment of the idioms of predation and incorporation in the service of a culture of transculturation. Rather than yielding to a command to mimic a dominant European culture, or resorting defensively to cultural purisms, *Antropofagia* purportedly exhorted Brazilian modernists to revel

in their omnivory, their capacity to digest and transsubstantiate the power of dangerous and desirable European others with wit and style in the manner of the Tupinamba described by Montaigne. Hence the iconicity of one of Andrade's most famous catch-phrases, "Tupi or not Tupi." It is perhaps in the spirit of this manifesto that the essayist and editor Suzanne Césaire declares, in 1942, that Martinican poetry will be anthropophagic or it will not be. As Loichot glosses the statement, it is a call to a robust and fearless appropriation of surrealism through undoing the categories of devourer and devoured, original and imitator.⁵³

What kind of an eating is cannibalism, and what form of hunger does it involve? If, following Derrida, we believe that "the question is no longer one of knowing if it is 'good' to eat the other or if the other is 'good' to eat, nor of knowing which other. One eats him regardless and lets oneself be eaten by him" – if we believe, in other words, that anthropophagy, symbolic or literal, is irreducible – how do we eat well? From Derrida's perspective, eating emphatically brings to the fore questions concerning the limits and boundaries of the human subject with respect to the other (whether human or animal); even as we partake of others, we also eat with them: "'One must eat well' does not mean above all taking in and grasping in itself, but learning and giving to eat, learning-to-give-the other-to eat. One never eats entirely on one's own: this constitutes the rule underlying the statement, 'One must eat well.'"⁵⁴ Work by Claude Lévi-Strauss and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro accords with this sense of cannibalism as an open (albeit violent) system designed to nurture metamorphic becoming.⁵⁵ What might this tell us about just forms of eating and being eaten in a postcolonial society? That the hunger of empire involves a kind of over-eating (rather than eating as such) is something we have seen. Since hunger is the experience of lack and dependence, it is not always self-possessed, however; the sugar boycotts are an instance of the double logic of desire and aversion that so often marks imperial appetite. But what is just eating in postcoloniality? Cannibal eating, in the ironic postcolonial recasting of a Suzanne Césaire or a Derrida, is unlike imperial eating in that involves both a vulnerable openness to the other, engagements with whom both feed and throw into crisis the regulatory apparatuses that have structured these encounters. It is an apposite irony that it is the trope originally deployed to segregate civilized from savage that proves amenable to an allegorization of eating well.

Notes

1. Sidney Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1985).

2. Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (Aberdeen: George Clark, 1848), 413.
3. For an account of developments in exploration and discovery in the late medieval period, especially in the western rim of Latin Christendom – developments that found their most spectacular effect in 1492 and 1498 – see Felipe Fernández-Armesto, “Exploration and Discovery,” in *The New Cambridge Medieval History, Volume VII: c.1415–c.1500*, ed. Christopher Allmand (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 175–201.
4. Smith, *An Inquiry*, 143.
5. Paul Freedman, *Out of the East: Spices and the Medieval Imagination* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 188–90. There is also a significant bibliography of materials on the forms of globalization that antedated the age of European exploration. For accounts that focus on the Indian Ocean region, see Janet Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony: The World System, AD 1250–1350* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991); K.N. Chaudhuri, *Asia before Europe: Economy and Civilisation of the Indian Ocean from the Rise of Islam to 1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); and Amitav Ghosh, *In An Antique Land* (Delhi: Ravi Dayal, 1992).
6. Shankar Raman, *Framing “India”: The Colonial Imaginary in Early Modern Culture* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), 2.
7. Salman Rushdie, *The Moor’s Last Sigh* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1995), 4–5. For an extended consideration of the gastropolitics of empire and of postcoloniality, see Valerie Loichot, *The Tropics Bite Back: Culinary Coups in Caribbean Literature* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2013) and my own *Alimentary Tracts: Appetites, Aversions, and the Postcolonial* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).
8. See Bruce Robbins on the grandiose claims made by some commodity historians that their favored commodities “have the power to get continents covered, dynasties toppled, mountains moved” (“Commodity Histories,” *PMLA* 120.2 [March 2005], 454). Lizzie Collingham has argued in her recent book for the importance of the Newfoundland fish trade in the Tudor period in producing the knowledge of Atlantic currents and winds that would prove serviceable to explorers searching for sea routes to the Spice Islands (*The Taste of Empire: How Britain’s Quest for Food Shaped the Modern World* [New York: Basic Books, 2017], 5).
9. Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *Tastes of Paradise: A Social History of Spices, Stimulants, and Intoxicants*, trans. David Jacobson (New York: Vintage Books, 1992), xiii.
10. Paul Freedman, “Spices and Late-Medieval European Ideas of Scarcity and Value,” *Speculum* 80.4 (October 2005), 1224.
11. Freedman, *Out of the East*, 142.
12. Andrew Dalby, “Christopher Columbus, Gonzalo Pizarro, and the Search for Cinnamon,” *Gastronomica* 1.2 (Spring 2001), 40–9.
13. Sidney Mintz, “Food Enigmas, Colonial and Postcolonial,” *Gastronomica* 10.1 (Winter 2010), 149.
14. Collingham, *The Taste of Empire*, 5.
15. Rachel Laudan, *Cuisine and Empire: Cooking in World History* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2013), 248. Timothy Morton contends, though,

that spices retained their status as fantasy objects and as ideologically charged substances long after their economic value had declined (*The Poetics of Spice: Romantic Consumerism and the Exotic* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000], 10). A poetics of spice thus had a far longer afterlife than the duration of its trade would suggest. As in the instance of the received narrative of European exploration in quest of spices, the purely functionalist explanation produces glaring blind spots.

16. For tea and sugar, see Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace, *Consuming Subjects: Women, Shopping and Business in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 19–70. For coffee, see Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989). For a useful summary of the intimacies that bound metropolitan and colonial plantation economies, see Mimi Sheller, *Consuming the Caribbean: From Arawaks to Zombies* (London: Routledge, 2003), 71–104.
17. Collingham, *The Taste of Empire*, 96.
18. Mintz, *Sweetness and Power*, 180.
19. Troy Bickham, “Eating the Empire: Intersections of Food, Cookery and Imperialism in Eighteenth-Century Britain,” *Past and Present* 198 (February 2008), 72.
20. Sucheta Mazumdar, “The Impact of New World Food Crops on the Diet and Economy of China and India, 1600–1900,” in *Food in Global History*, ed. Raymond Grew (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999), 58–78.
21. Collingham, *The Taste of Empire*, 67.
22. See Charlotte Sussman, “Women and the Politics of Sugar, 1792,” *Representations* 48 (Autumn 1994), 48–69; and Morton, *The Poetics of Spice*, 171–206.
23. William Cowper, “Epigram,” *The Poetical Works of William Cowper*, ed. H. S. Milford (London: Oxford University Press, 1934), 376.
24. Timothy Morton, “Blood sugar,” in *The Poetics of Spice*, 171–206. In this chapter Morton examines in some detail the “blood sugar *topos*” in Robert Southey’s sonnets on the slave trade (1797).
25. That the inequities persist in some form to do this day is evident in Jamaica Kincaid, *A Small Place* (New York: Farrar, 1988). Martinique and Guadeloupe, both French overseas departments, remain dependent on metropolitan France for basic necessities like food.
26. Jeffrey M. Pilcher, “The Caribbean from 1492 to the Present,” in *The Cambridge World History of Food*, vol. 2, ed. Kenneth M. Kiple and Kriemhild Coneè Ornelas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 1278–88.
27. Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom* (New York: Miller, Orton & Mulligan, 1855), 75–6. Also see his first autobiography, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, for a continuation of the same theme: “We were not regularly allowanceed. Our food was coarse corn meal boiled. This was called mush. It was put into a large wooden tray or trough, and set down upon the ground. The children were then called, like so many pigs, and like so many pigs they would come and devour the mush; some with oyster-shells, others with pieces of shingle, some with naked hands, and none with spoons. He that ate fastest got most; he that was strongest secured the best place; and few left the trough satisfied” (Boston: Anti-Slavery Office, 1845), 27.

28. Charles W. Chesnutt, *The Conjure Woman and Other Conjure Tales*, ed. Richard H. Brodhead (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993).
29. Orlando Patterson, *The Sociology of Slavery* (London, 1967), 217.
30. Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano*, ed. Angelo Costanzo (Peterborough: Broadview, 2001), 77–8.
31. Sheller, *Consuming the Caribbean*, 81.
32. Cited in Christine Kinealy, *The Great Irish Famine: Impact, Ideology and Rebellion* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 26. Also see Cecil Woodham-Smith, *The Great Hunger: Ireland 1845–1849* (1962; New York: Penguin, 1991) and Cormac O’Grada, *Black ‘47 and Beyond: The Great Irish Famine in History, Economy, and Memory* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999).
33. Terry Eagleton, *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger: Studies in Irish Culture* (London: Verso, 1995), 13.
34. George Cusack and Sarah Goss, eds., *Hungry Words: Images of Ireland in the Irish Canon* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2005). For other key discussions of the place of the Great Hunger in Irish literature, see Christopher Morash, *Writing the Irish Famine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); Margaret Kelleher, *The Feminization of Famine: Expressions of the Inexpressible?* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997); Melissa Fegan, *Literature and the Irish Famine, 1845–1919* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); David Lloyd, *Irish Times: Temporalities of Modernity* (Dublin: Field Day, 2008); and Marguerite Corporaal, “Writing of the Irish Famine,” www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199846719/obo-9780199846719-0107.xml#. Accessed May 13, 2018.
35. See David Arnold, “Hunger in the Garden of Plenty: The Bengal Famine of 1770,” in Alessa Johns, ed. *Dreadful Visitations: Confronting Natural Catastrophe in the Age of Enlightenment* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 81–111. Arnold notes that the sufferings of the famine-stricken in 1770 helped produce a colonial vision that blamed the victims as passive and fatalistic.
36. Dadabhai Naoroji, “England’s Duties to India,” in *Essays, Speeches, Addresses and Writings (on Indian Politics) of the Hon’ble Dadabhai Naoroji* (Bombay: Caxton Printing Works, 1887), 29.
37. Sukanya Banerjee, *Becoming Imperial Citizens: Indians in the Late Victorian Empire* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 60.
38. R.C. Dutt, *Indian Famines: Their Causes and Prevention* (London: P.S. King & Son, 1901), 3.
39. R. C. Dutt, *The Economic History of India Under Early British Rule*, volume 1 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Truebner, 1902), viii, xiv.
40. Nikhil Sarkar, *A Matter of Conscience: Artists Bear Witness to the Great Bengal Famine of 1943*, trans. Satyabrata Dutta (Calcutta: Punascha, 1998), 22.
41. Mike Davis, *Late Victorian Holocasts: El Niño Famines and the Making of the Third World* (New York: Verso, 2001).
42. Philip McMichael, “The World Food Crisis in Historical Perspective,” *Monthly Review* 61.3 (July–August 2009).
43. E. P. Thompson, “The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century,” *Past & Present* 50 (February 1971), 76–136; Raj Patel, *Stuffed and Starved: The Hidden Battle for the World Food System* (New York: Melville House, 2008); and Crystal Bartolovich, “A Natural History of ‘Food Riots,’” *New Formations* 69 (Summer 2010), 42–61.

44. “Oswald de Andrade’s ‘Cannibalist Manifesto,’” trans. and introduced by Leslie Bary, *Latin American Literary Review* 38 (1991), 38.
45. To be fair, migrant foodways are almost as insistently thematized in the writings of a postcolonial diaspora, as Anita Mannur’s *Culinary Fictions: Food in South Asian Diasporic Culture* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2009) demonstrates.
46. Tim Pratt and James Vernon, “‘Appeal from this Fiery Bed’: The Colonial Politics of Gandhi’s Fasts and Their Metropolitan Reception,” *Journal of British Studies* 44.1 (January 2005), 94.
47. See Pratt and Vernon for a discussion of Niebour’s cartoons.
48. His dietary asceticism was spurred both by a desire to reduce the quotient of violence in daily life but also to protest against the modern colonial order’s ethos of over-consumption.
49. Banu Bargu, *Starve and Immolate: The Politics of Human Weapons* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014).
50. Bargu, Starve and Immolate, 14.
51. Achille Mbembe has a mordant analysis of these pathologies of consumption and power in “The Banality of Power and the Aesthetics of Vulgarity in the Postcolony,” *Public Culture* 4.2 (1992), 1–30.
52. Loichot, *The Tropics Bite Back*; and Njeri Githire, *Cannibal Writes: Eating Others in Caribbean and Indian Ocean Women’s Writing* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2014). In *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, the author refers to slave-traders as “human flesh-mongers” (4).
53. Loichot, *The Tropics Bite Back*, 141–61.
54. Jacques Derrida, “‘Eating Well,’ or the Calculation of the Subject: An Interview with Jacques Derrida,” in Eduardo Cadava, Peter Connor, and Jean-Luc Nancy, eds., *Who Comes after the Subject?* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 114–15.
55. See Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques*, trans. John and Doreen Weightman (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992) and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, *From the Enemy’s Point of View: Humanity and Divinity in an Amazonian Society*, trans. Catherine V. Howard (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

I 2

ERICA FRETWELL

Black Power in the Kitchen

In the cuisine, contradiction comes home and is not unhappy.
Hortense Spillers¹

The kitchen has long been a site of black female labor: of commensality and generativity, of preservation and perseverance, of contestation and experimentation. With this history in mind, black feminist activists and writers Barbra Smith and Audre Lorde named their women of color press Kitchen Table. “The kitchen is the center of the home, the place where women in particular work and communicate with each other,” Smith explained in 1989. “Kitchen Table Press began because of our need for autonomy, our need to determine independently both the content and the conditions of our work and to control the words and images that were produced about us.”² The kitchen table props up the white woman’s writing table, tucked away in a room of one’s own. But Smith and Lorde do not distinguish cook-space from think-space; black women’s kitchen tables are writing tables. Kitchen Table Press did not publish culinary writing as such. It did, however, publish writing that was culinary – in Fred Moten’s use of the term as a synesthetic “evacuation of reason that’s bound to a certain giving up of, which is to say, giving oneself up to, the body and its base or basic (or basicic) functions.”³ The reclamation of the culinary is thus a reclamation of the base body and historically debased black female body as a tastemaker. For if the kitchen table is a social space of black food-making, then the culinary, Kitchen Table emphasizes, is an aesthetic mode of black world-making.

Although food is a common trope in African American literature, food writing tends to inhabit the peripheries of the literary canon. It first entered literary studies through feminist recovery of an underexplored mode of women’s writing: recipes. Starting with M. F. K. Fisher’s “Anatomy of a Recipe” and later Susan Leonardi’s *PMLA* essay “Recipes for Reading,” it is now axiomatic that recipes and cookbooks are “worthy objects of serious textual analysis.”⁴ The cookbook specifically is seen as a “democratic genre of writing” – and a hybrid one.⁵ Some cookbooks are “recipistolary” novels that

appropriate “the genre of the novel” by incorporating the “performance of cooking,” while others are elegies that “mark the death of a beloved or the passing of a people,” and still others are romances that offer women readers “an escape from daily life.”⁶ Indeed, feminist reevaluations of cookbooks help account for the inclusion of an excerpt from Abby Fisher’s *What Mrs. Fisher Knows about Old Southern Cooking* (1881) in the anthology *The Portable Nineteenth-Century African American Women Writers*. Yet African American cookbooks, while thoroughly historicized, largely remain an underexplored site of textual production and experimentation. Taking a cue from Kitchen Table, this essay tracks the cookbook – an important genre of black women’s writing – as a literary “test kitchen” where not only foods but also social formations and politics are developed.

Measures of Freedom

Early African American cookbooks can be read as responses to what food historian Toni Tipton-Martin calls “the Jemima code”: words and images that portray black cooks as “ignorant laborers incapable of creative culinary artistry” but “born with good kitchen instincts.”⁷ Jemima, of course, is an epithet for the mammy: a mythic black woman characterized by her benevolence, acceptance of her racial and sexual inferiority, and maternal devotion to white people.⁸ Because the mammy has been fundamental to the production of American subjectivities and culture, this figure represents an especially dramatic instance of eating the Other. When “ethnicity becomes spice,” bell hooks famously warned, “racial differences will be continually commodified and offered up as new dishes to enhance the white palate – the Other will be eaten, consumed, and forgotten.”⁹ Although the mammy’s round body and smiling face bespeak an ungovernable appetite, she rarely eats. Instead, she makes and *is* food for white people, who consume her body through foodstuffs (Aunt Jemima pancake mix), performances (minstrelsy), and goods (mammy cookie jars). It is no accident, then, that the publication of the first cookbooks authored by black women accompanied this massive and mass-mediated racial appetite. Malinda Russell’s *A Domestic Cook Book* (1866) and Abby Fisher’s *What Mrs. Fisher Knows about Old Southern Cooking* (1881) represented at once what black women cooked and black women as skilled cooks. Writing with and against the mammy, they turned this restrictive trope into a loophole for advancing their freedom and promoting their knowledge.¹⁰

Combined with the prohibitive cost of printing, prohibitions against literacy forced many black women – who made and sold food as a mode of independence and “targeted self-care” – to archive their recipes mentally and transmit them orally.¹¹ Russell and Fisher were some of if not the first black

cooks to use print to claim autonomy and reclaim culinary knowledge from white Americans.¹² In her preface, Russell explains that the self-published cookbook is meant to secure her financial independence. Owner of a “pastry shop” who “saved a considerable sum of money” for herself by “hard labor and economy,” she was robbed by a “guerilla party” in 1864 and, with her son, exiled from her native Tennessee to Michigan.¹³ The “Rules and Regulations of the Kitchen” tells us more about white supremacist regulatory practices than her kitchen practices:

I have made Cooking my employment for the last twenty years, in the first families of Tennessee, Virginia, North Carolina, and Kentucky. [...] Being compelled to leave the South on account of my Union principles [...] and having been robbed of all my hard-earned wages which I had saved; and as I am now advanced in years, with no other means of support than my own labor; I have put out this book with the intention of benefiting the public as well as myself.¹⁴

A Domestic Cook Book is a fundraising effort that makes the pastry chef’s sentimental plea – her dramatic life story and precarious domestic livelihood – central to its sugary recipes. Fisher too works toward autonomy, but rather than cast herself as a supplicant she embodies the “complete instructor.”¹⁵ An award-winning cook in San Francisco, Fisher omitted her life story – the only reference being “Blackberry Syrup,” an “old Southern plantation recipe among colored people”¹⁶ – wagering that “readers might be less willing to accept her authority as an expert” if they knew she had been a slave, Rafia Zafar speculates.¹⁷ Whereas autobiography and culinary expertise are mutually reinforcing in *Domestic Cook Book* (Russell’s tutelage authorizes the cookbook, which supports her), *Mrs. Fisher* severs them in order to expand its author’s entrepreneurial brand.

Both women subverted the mammy trope by incorporating the kitchen into, rather than separating it from, the market. Far from “magical and innate,” their cooking is a skill that adheres to the politics of respectability.¹⁸ Thus Russell states, “I learned my trade of Franny Steward, a colored cook, of Virginia, and have since learned many new things in the art of Cooking. I cook after the plan of the ‘Virginia Housewife.’”¹⁹ Having studied under another black cook and studied Mary Randolph’s influential cookbook *The Virginia Housewife* (1824), Russell represents a professional whose cooking is anything but haphazard.²⁰ For example:

Indian Meal Pudding.

Into one quart of boiling milk stir one quart sifted meal; then add one quart cold milk, two well-beaten eggs, half teacup sugar, one do. flour, salt and spice to taste; stir it well, and pour into buttered dish; bake two hours; serve with butter.²¹

The recipe is traditional in content and format. Although Russell substitutes sugar for molasses (a New England staple unavailable in Michigan), by including the recipe that settler colonists adapted to New World and slave trade foodstuffs she claims American-ness. And by mirroring Randolph's style – sparse prose, nonexistent authorial persona, the incorporation of ingredients into the instructions – she links black women's cooking to comprehensive knowledge and professional authority. Raising the stature of its author's domestic labor through settler-colonial substance and codified style, "Indian Meal Pudding" breaks the Jemima code.

Fisher too breaks the Jemima code, but does so from within. Whereas Russell's dishes reflect Middle American tastes, Fisher's are "textbook" southern cooking. The cookbook's title dramatizes the tension between the industrial professional on the one hand and plantation cuisine on the other. For the author is both "Mrs. Fisher," an honorific that uses formality to repel the specious kinship claims made on the mammy ("Aunt Abby"), and a representative of the "Old" South of plantation slavery. This tension plays out in the recipes as well:

Two pounds of potatoes will make two pies. Boil the potatoes soft; peel and mash fine through a cullender while hot; one tablespoonful of butter to be mashed in with the potato. Take five eggs and beat the yelks [sic] and whites separate and add one gill of milk; sweeten to taste; squeeze the juice of one orange, and grate one-half of the peel into the liquid. One half teaspoonful of salt in the potatoes. Have only one crust and that at the bottom of the plate. Bake quickly.²²

Fisher serves "an audience hungry for that 'old plantation flavor,' especially from a bona fide ex-slave cook-turned-savvy businessman."²³ Yet she is more "meticulous and exacting in her instructions" than Russell.²⁴ "Sweet Potato Pie" advises that two pounds of potatoes yield two pies, and it directs the reader to mash the potatoes "fine" and beat the egg whites and yolks separately. Fisher privileges standard pounds, teaspoons, and tablespoons over subjective pinches and dashes. The pie thus conjures plantation nostalgia while the recipe for it bespeaks the bourgeois domestic science of Catharine Beecher's *A Treatise on Domestic Economy* (1842). In this way, *Mrs. Fisher* capitalizes on the trope of the mammy by altering the racial power structure it indexes. The black woman, not the white woman, is the domestic authority.

Fisher thus deploys the mammy's culinary aura to further her celebrity yet distances herself from it by stressing the reproducibility or "transcribability" of what she knows. But more than "transcribable," *What Mrs. Fisher Knows* is an actual transcript. "Not being able to read or write myself, and my husband also having been without the advantages of

an education,” Fisher explains, she dictated the recipes to the San Francisco Women’s Co-operative that published it.²⁵ Rather than follow the conventions of mammy cookbooks with “advice phonetically drawn out for a white reading audience,” the transcribers elide the author’s accent.²⁶ Scholars have thus read *Mrs. Fisher* as “a transcript that works hard to present itself as anything but,” that is, as an instance of eating the Other: a black woman’s voice muted by white feminists.²⁷ But the Other bites back. The collaborative text reasserts Fisher’s bodily presence in mistranslations of her southern lilt: “Jumberlie” (jambalaya), “Circuit Hash” (succotash), and “Carolas” (crullers). More than a top-down whitewashing, *Mrs. Fisher* manifests the inter-animation of the culinary and the phonic. In excess of standardized encoding, the irrepressible musicality of Abby Fisher’s voice consumes the Jemima code, bending it until it breaks.

Uplifting “Dishes”

Whereas Russell and Fisher used the cookbook to promote their individual expertise to white readers, early twentieth-century black women used community cookbooks to honor each other’s expertise. A postbellum phenomenon, the community cookbook includes recipes *by and for* members of a specific community, often for fundraising purposes. Tellingly, the emergence and proliferation of community cookbooks converged with racial uplift, a postbellum ideology that advocated the bourgeois values of “black morality, patriarchal authority, and a culture of self-improvement” to advance black people’s “recognition, enfranchisement, and survival as a class,” as Kevin Gaines has powerfully shown.²⁸ Domestic science was a crucial apparatus of social reform and uplift.²⁹ Designed to bring the home kitchen in line with the operations of the factory, cooking schools and cookbooks – like Fannie Farmer’s *The Boston Cooking School Cook Book* (1895) – were technologies of assimilation and progress. Because the “ethos of the era for many upwardly striving blacks was less about preserving one’s heritage or proving one’s racial authenticity than achieving the rights and benefits of citizenship,” Doris Witt notes, domestic science was considered a crucial means of class mobility.³⁰ The community cookbook thus encoded uplift as a collective effort and a (culinary) science; its recipes made a case for black cooking as traditionally American while honoring its unique contributions to national taste.

Devoted to the uplift ideology of black female domesticity, early black community cookbooks were more interested in social taste than sensory taste. In *The Federation Cook Book* (1910), a collection of recipes

“contributed by the Colored Women of the State of California,” cooking does not fill stomachs so much as it fulfills the marriage plot. The opening “Cookery Jingle” sings that ballad of a pretty woman who could not cook. When her beau learns this:

His flight he quickly took,
And his girl is single still,
Because she couldn’t Cook!
[...]
Before a man marries
’Tis the gown or the look,
But after the wedding
He looks for a cook.
[...]
Go forth then a blessing,
You dear little book,
And happiness ever
Attend the good cook.³¹

The cookbook is, in no uncertain terms, intended to help black women secure and sustain a marriage. *Federation Cook Book* steers working-class black women away from the public market, which Russell and Fisher had worked to enter, and into the private arena of the marriage market – of “morality, decorum, and social grace.”³² Adhering to the uplift activism of its sponsoring association (the National Association of Colored Women’s Clubs), the cookbook reflects California’s hybrid foodways – from “Spanish Rice” to “String Beans a la Creole” – yet distances itself from “black” foods or dishes. Any recipe resembling fellow Californian Abby Fisher’s sweet potato pie is missing. The closest one comes is a “Potato Cake” recipe submitted by “Mrs. R.H. Hunter, Elevado Drive, Pasadena, Cal.” that includes raisins, walnuts, chocolate, cloves, cinnamon, allspice, and “mashed potato.”³³ More important than the taste of food is the upwardly mobile aspirations the food represents. The cookbook tells the story not of what black women can do in the kitchen but of what the kitchen can do for black women.

The aim of *Federation Cook Book* was to represent and realize black women as the angel, not the mammy, in the house. *Ebony* cooking editor Freda DeKnight signaled this ideology in the title of her community cookbook *A Date with a Dish* (1948): Uplift occurs through the dishes that the “dish” (an attractive woman) prepares for her friends and family. Yet the broader goal of her cookbook was to hail a national community, for “there has long been a need for a non-regional cookbook that would contain recipes . . . from Negroes all over America,”

she asserted.³⁴ *Date* is a postwar community cookbook that tried to unify middle-class African Americans through a radical recontextualization of the recipe. For rather than attach the author's name and city to a recipe, DeKnight recounts the life stories of "some of our greatest culinary artists [who] were unable to read or write."³⁵ The cook effectively rounds out and gives substance to the recipe:

*Mary Gaines, a rural schoolteacher, showed me how food was canned, making use of every conceivable edible meat and vegetable. [...] Her job was to travel from farm to farm and give classes in the little cabins where neighbors assembled to learn to make the best use of what food they had available. I met women who cooked only to feed their families, and others who cooked to make a living, and I found that they all had the same purpose in mind; nourishing food tastily prepared. So here we have dated several good dishes from of Little Rock's best, and hope you will be using them!*³⁶

White Potato Pie
(Mrs. N.P. Bradford)

2 cups mashed potatoes	1 tsp. mace
1/3 tbsp. butter	1/2 tsp. nutmeg
1 tsp. cinnamon	1 cup sugar
3 eggs	2 cups milk
1/2 tsp. salt	1 tsp. grated orange peel
1 tbsp. orange juice	

Mash potatoes with butter and salt. Add sugar, slightly beaten eggs, spices and milk. Add orange peel and juice. Pour into unbaked pie shell. Bake until firm, about 40 minutes. Makes one 8-inch pie.³⁷

DeKnight's assimilationist politics are borne out in the balance struck between the recipe's clinical staccato and the biographical sketch's conversational tone. The cookbook offers access to black vernacular culinary traditions through the formal tradition of the scientized recipe.³⁸ Yet *Date* is radical for valuing the knowledge of black cooks, lay and professional alike, as well as for emphasizing the sheer variety of black cooking. For instance, it includes many permutations of sweet potato pie – not only the classic custard-style version (*à la Abby Fisher*) and Bradford's white potato adaptation, but also a "Plymouth Rock Sweet Potato Pie," accompanied by a brief sketch of its author Mary Jane Wooten, a professional New England cook:

Plymouth Rock Sweet Potato Pie

4 medium yams $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. lemon extract
1 heaping tbsp. butter warm milk
sugar

Boil yams until tender and soft. Peel and mash with butter. Add sugar to taste (since some yams are sweeter than others). Add warm milk until potatoes reach the consistency of heavy cream. Add lemon extract. Pour into an unbaked piecrust. Cut one-inch pastry strips and place 6 across top of pie. Place in a 400°F. oven and bake 30 minutes. Makes one 8-inch pie.³⁹

From white potatoes to yams, orange peel to lemon extract, single- to double-crust, *Date* shows that there is no *single* sweet potato pie and no *single* African American cuisine. It decenters the South from the history of black cooking – while still including recipes for “slave” foods like catfish and chitterlings, which remain “a prominent feature of African American cookbooks.”⁴⁰ *Date with a Dish* both advances black culinary creativity and destabilizes racial authenticity.

Postwar community cookbooks thus joined civil rights activism by expanding community from the regional to national scale. But if for DeKnight food constituted history, in the National Council of Negro Women’s *Historical Cookbook of the American Negro* (1958) food reflects history. *Historical Cookbook* arranges recipes not by genre (soups, salads) but by the calendar, starting with “Hopping John” for Emancipation Proclamation Day and ending with “Hot Apple Punch” on Christmas. By linking food to America’s black and white “heroes and heroines,” explained its editor Sue Bailey Thurman, it offered a “‘palatable’ approach to history.”⁴¹ For “Carver Commemoration Day” (January 5), the cookbook recounts that George Washington Carver “worked his way through high school and college to become the world-famous scientist whose labor at Tuskegee Institute would go far to change the eating habits of the South.”⁴² Included are Carver’s recipes for peanuts and sweet potatoes:

Sliced Potato Pie

Line a deep baking dish with a rich sheet of pastry. Parboil the number of potatoes desired. When two-thirds done, remove the skins, sliced lengthwise, very thin, cover the dish to a depth of 2 inches, sprinkle with ground allspice and a dash of ginger, cloves and nutmeg. To a pie sufficient for six people, scatter around the top in small pieces a lump of butter the size of a hen’s egg; add one teacupful of sugar and $\frac{1}{2}$ teacupful of molasses. Add $\frac{1}{2}$ pint of cream, dust a little flour over the top sparingly; cover with hot water, put on upper

crust, crimp edges, and bake in a moderate oven until cone [sic]. Serve hot with or without sauce.

*Carver's more than 200 discoveries for various uses of the peanut, sweet potato and other products of the soil greatly lessened the miseries of southern farmers both Negro and white.*⁴³

Carver's recipe revives an earlier version of the pie, evident in Malinda Russell's double-crust "Sweet Potato Slice Pie," which calls for sliced potatoes spiced with ginger, cloves, and nutmeg and moistened with water, brandy, vinegar, and lemon juice. In reviving Carver's revival of sliced sweet potato pie, *Historical Cookbook* moves what counts as community past the spatial – the local (*Federation*) and the national (*Date*) – to include the temporal – what foremothers and forefathers ate or would have eaten.⁴⁴ But class always conditions this historical lens. "The finest 'barbecues,' picnics and outings," it states, "take place on 'Juneteenth,'" then offers:

Barbecued Veal Roast

4 pound rolled veal shoulder	1 tablespoon celery salt
salt and pepper	1 tablespoon sugar
¾ cup catsup	1 ½ teaspoon dry mustard
½ cup water	dash cayenne pepper
2 tablespoons vinegar	1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce

Rub roast with salt and pepper. Put in oven – combine sauce and pour over roast. Bake 2 ½ hours at 350 degrees.⁴⁵

Historical Cookbook celebrates black emancipation by downplaying blackness. Although the "finest" barbecues take place, the African practice of barbecue is "brought indoors and applied to a 'non-African' meat, veal," Anne L. Bower observes.⁴⁶ Because of their negative race and class associations, outdoor barbecue, pig feet, and chitterlings are all but absent. The cookbook thus performs the NCNW's work of integration by downplaying or excluding stereotypically "black" dishes. In keeping with uplift discourse, community cookbooks crafted black women's culinary knowledge as a collective enterprise – and excluded their poorer sisters from that collectivity.

The Souls of Black Food

If African American cookbooks of the early- to mid-twentieth century promoted a politics of respectability in order to desegregate African American from American cuisine, then the proliferation of soul food cookbooks in the 1970s can be read as a “debate among African Americans over the appropriate food ‘practices’ of blackness.”⁴⁷ While the definition of soul food is continually under debate, the term generally names a cuisine that harkens back to the slave foods of the South, that “looks back at the past and celebrates a genuine taste palate” while acknowledging the history of black oppression, in the words of Jessica B. Harris.⁴⁸ With the rise of black nationalism, “hog and hominy became a political statement and was embraced by many middle-class blacks who had previously publicly eschewed it as a relic of a slave past.”⁴⁹ To celebrate soul food “was to proclaim oneself black, proud, and opposed to a white-dominated social order.”⁵⁰ African American cookbooks subsequently shifted in both content and style. No longer beholden to white palates and “objective” kitchen protocol, their celebration of diasporic black foodstuffs involved a diasporic aesthetic: a move away from the textually spare and formulaic domestic science ideal, and toward a more discursive, hybrid mode that mixed recipes with memoir, history, and poetry. Experimental in form and content, black women’s cookbooks constituted a “fugitive science,” following Britt Rusert, that rejected the reformist and racist premises of domestic science to offer up connections, across space and time, with women of the African diaspora.⁵¹ They instantiate black female cooking as a fugitive science of approximated measurements, of subjective sights and smells, of gastronomic heritage – and, against black power’s masculinism, matrilineal traditions and black female resilience.

Considered the “high-water mark of the nexus of Black Power and cuisine,” Vertamae Smart-Grosvenor’s *Vibration Cooking, or Travels of a Geechee Girl* (1970) signals in its title that black cooking is a “fugitive” praxis.⁵² In the first chapter, “The Demystification of Food,” Smart-Grosvenor explains, “When I cook, I never measure or weigh anything. I cook by vibration. I can tell by the look and smell of it. Most of the ingredients in this book are approximate. Some of the recipes that people gave me list the amounts, but for my part, I just do it by vibration.”⁵³ To demystify food is to de-mythify the mammy. The mammy’s cooking is a matter of instinct and luck; Smart-Grosvenor’s cooking enjoins bodily knowledge and cultural tradition. The mammy speaks in a dialect crafted by and for white people; Smart-Grosvenor’s folksy tone engages black vernacular traditions. The mammy prepares food for her white “family”; Smart-Grosvenor cooks for her family. Indeed, she gives black women a “kitchen of one’s own” in the book’s dedication to “my mama and my grandmothers and my sisters” who worked “in miss ann’s kitchen and then came home to TCB in spite of slavery and

oppression and the moynihan report.” No longer servants to white people and beholden to their domestic science, black women serve only each other.

Vibration Cooking practices an avant-garde aesthetic that brings people together by breaking down genre. Rather than being neatly paired with discrete historical sketches, recipes flow in and out of the narrative, which itself mixes memoir, travelogue, and letters. In the “Name-Calling” chapter Smart-Grosvenor maintains, “A lot of new foods were brought to this country via the slave trade” like “so-called okra,” then addresses the reader: “If you are wondering how come I say so-called okra it is because the African name of okra is gombo. Just like so-called Negroes. We are Africans. Negroes only started when they got here. I am a black woman. I am tired of people calling me out of my name. Okra must be sick of that mess too.”⁵⁴ In revising or “remixing” US culinary history, Smart-Grosvenor mixes the culinary and the political:

I got another friend who is down on Chris Columbus. She says he was really out to lunch because he went looking for spices (didn’t grow none where he came from) and went the wrong way. Then when he got here claimed that he discovered the people who were here. Worst of all he called them out of their name. They taught him how to make

So-Called “Indian” Pudding

Scald and pour 1 quart of milk into a saucepan with $\frac{3}{4}$ cup yellow corn meal. Let them cook together for 25 minutes. If you have a double boiler use it, cook the milk and meal on top. If you don’t have a double boiler do the best you can. Mix in a bowl – salt, cinnamon, ginger, molasses and butter and 3 eggs (well beaten). Mix up the meal mixture and the ingredients in the bowl and then pour the whole thing into a well-greased baking pan. Place the pan in another pan of hot water and bake for 1 hour. You can serve it plain or with ice cream.⁵⁵

As recipes morph into anecdotes and anecdotes into recipes, the history of colonialism and settler colonialism become inextricably woven into the food. The deracination of “American” cuisine that the recipe performs unfolds, in part, through the disruption of normative textual genre. For its “generic plasticity” redoubles a “proto-diasporic model of black American culture,” which includes indigenous Americans.⁵⁶ Crucially, though, even as Smart-Grosvenor calls out the Eurocentric misnomer she misattributes the dish to Native Americans. As noted earlier, Native Americans likely made some kind of corn meal gruel or pudding sweetened with honey, but Indian Pudding is largely English in origin. Smart-Grosvenor’s Indian pudding is not especially radical or experimental in its substance – in fact, it hews even closer to the New England original than Russell’s recipe, which lacks molasses. What makes it radical, though, is both its re-contextualization as a settler colonial food and its inclusion in a post-civil rights

cookbook. Smart-Grosvenor turns one of the earliest “American” dishes into a critique of the nation’s colonial violence and peculiar institution. If “Indian Meal Pudding” helped Russell claim her rights as an American citizen, a century later “So-Called ‘Indian’ Pudding” reclaimed “America” for the shipped and the natives alike.

In the “geechee girl’s” kitchen, then, the recipe is a black female signifying on classically “white” dishes. By mingling the personal, the historical, the social, and the sensory, Smart-Grosvenor not only demystifies black cooking, she also decolonizes American cooking. Which is likely why Smart-Grosvenor concludes her cookbook with a poem called “The Kitchen”:

The kitchen is the most important room in my home. Tis the place
from which I do my thing.

I eat in the kitchen.

When friends drop in sometimes we never leave the kitchen.

I just do everything in the kitchen.

I wrote this book in the kitchen.

When I sew I set up the sewing machine in the kitchen.

I iron in the kitchen

The other day I tried to move the piano in but couldn’t get
anyone to help me.

The children do their homework in the kitchen.

Sometimes there is so much happening in the kitchen that I can’t get
to the stove to cook and we have to call chicken delight.⁵⁷

The kitchen is a black female space where eating happens, sociality happens, writing happens, domesticity happens, music happens, education happens. It is where everything happens, and therefore no cooking happens. It is where black women do their own “thing.” The poem is, in this way, a recipe of and for black feminism. In keeping with its foremothers – *A Domestic Cook Book*, *What Mrs. Fisher Knows about Old Southern Cooking*, *The Federation Cook Book*, *A Date with a Dish*, *The Historical Cookbook of the American Negro – Vibration Cooking* instructs the readers on the importance of kitchen tables, where we feel with and feed each other, where we prepare for each other, where we come home.

Notes

1. Hortense Spillers, “Peter’s Pans: Eating in the Diaspora” in *Black, White and in Color: Essays on American Literature and Culture* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 42.
2. Barbara Smith, “A Press of Our Own Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press,” *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 10.3 (1989), 11.

3. Fred Moten, *Black and Blur* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), 29.
4. Janet Theophano, *Eat My Words: Reading Women's Lives through the Cookbooks They Wrote* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 5. See also M. F. K. Fisher's collection of essays *With Bold Knife and Fork* (New York: Putnam, 1969) and Susan Leonardi, "Recipes for Reading: Summer Pasta, Lobster à la Riseholme, and Key Lime Pie," *PMLA* 104.3 (1989), 340–47.
5. Doris Witt, *Black Hunger: Food and the Politics of U.S. Identity* (New York: Oxford, 1999), 214.
6. Witt, *Black Hunger*, 11. Rafia Zafar, "Elegy and Remembrance in the Cookbooks of Alice B. Toklas and Edna Lewis," *MELUS* 38.4 (2013), 32. Anne Bower, "Romanced by Cookbooks," *Gastronomica* (May 2014), 35. A general – but by no means comprehensive – list of scholarship that situates cookbooks and recipes in relationship to literary form includes: Colleen Cotter, "Claiming a Piece of the Pie: How the Language of Recipes Defines Community" in Anne Bower, ed., *Recipes for Reading: Community Cookbooks, Stories, Histories* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997), 51–72; Janet Floyd and Laurel Forster, eds., *The Recipe Reader: Narratives, Contexts, Traditions* (London: Routledge, 2003); Patricia Clark, "Archiving Epistemologies and the Narrativity of Recipes in Ntozake Shange's *Sassafrass, Cypress, and Indigo*," *Callaloo* 30.1 (2007), 150–62; Erica Fretwell, "Emily Dickinson in Domingo," *J19: The Journal of Nineteenth-Century Americanists* 1.1 (2013), 71–96; Kyla Wazana Tompkins, "Consider the Recipe," *J19: The Journal of Nineteenth-Century Americanists* 1.2 (2013), 439–45.
7. Toni Tipton-Martin, *The Jemima Code: Two Centuries of African-American Cookbooks* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2015), 2.
8. For a comprehensive history of the mammy, see Kimberly Wallace-Sanders, *Mammy: A Century of Race, Gender, and Southern Memory* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2008). See also Sara Walden, "Marketing the Mammy: Revisions of Labor and Middle-Class Identity in Southern Cookbooks, 1880–1930," in David A. Davis and Tara Powell, eds., *Writing the Kitchen: Essays on Southern Literature and Foodways* (Jackson, MS: University of Mississippi Press, 2014).
9. bell hooks, "Eating the Other: Desire and Resistance," in *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1992), 21; 39. For an account of literal and imagined cannibalism, and the homoerotics thereof, see Vincent Woodard, *The Delectable Negro: Human Consumption and Homoeroticism within U.S. Slave Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2014). Jennifer Fleissner reads, via Charles Chesnutt, nineteenth-century readers' consumption of plantation nostalgia as a mode of cannibalism, in "Earth-Eating, Addiction, Nostalgia: Charles Chesnutt's Diasporic Regionalism," *Studies in Romanticism* 49 (2010), 313–36.
10. There is a wealth of scholarship on the loophole (as a site of and trope for resistance) in nineteenth-century African American writing. For starters, see Valerie Smith's classic essay "'Loopholes of Retreat': Architecture and Ideology in Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*," in Henry Louis Gates, Jr., ed., *Reading Black, Reading Feminist* (New York: Meridian Books, 1990).
11. Tipton-Martin, *The Jemima Code*, 10.
12. Robert Roberts's *House Servant's Directory* (1827) and Tunis Campbell's *Hotel Keepers, Head Waiters, and Housekeepers' Guide* (1848) contain recipes but are

- meant as manuals for home and hotel management. Roberts and Campbell were not chefs.
13. Malinda Russell, *A Domestic Cook Book: Containing a Careful Selection of Useful Receipts for the Kitchen*. Facsimile reprint (Ann Arbor, MI: William Clements Library, 2007), 4.
 14. Russell, *A Domestic Cook Book*, 5.
 15. Abby Fisher, *What Mrs. Fisher Knows about Old Southern Cooking*. Reprint (Bedford, MA: Applewood, 1995), 4.
 16. Fisher, *What Mrs. Fisher Knows*, 50.
 17. Rafia Zafar, “Recipes for Respect: Black Hospitality Entrepreneurs before World War I,” in Anne Bower, ed., *African American Foodways: Explorations of History and Culture* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 141.
 18. Rebecca Sharpless, *Cooking in Other Women’s Kitchens: Domestic Workers in the South, 1865–1960* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), xxiii.
 19. Russell, *A Domestic Cook Book*, 5.
 20. Tipton-Martin, *The Jemima Cookbook*, 7.
 21. Russell, *A Domestic Cook Book*, 33.
 22. Fisher, *What Mrs. Fisher Knows*, 26.
 23. Marcie Cohen Ferris, *The Edible South: The Power of Food and the Making of an American Region* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 90.
 24. Harris, *High on the Hog*, 166.
 25. Fisher, *What Mrs. Fisher Knows*, 4.
 26. Marcia Chatelain, “Black Women’s Food Writing and the Archive of Black Women’s History,” in Jennifer Jensen Wallach, ed., *Dethroning the Deceitful Pork Chop: African American Foodways from Slavery to Obama* (Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 2015), 33.
 27. Andrew Warnes, *Hunger Overcome? Food and Resistance in 20th-Century African American Literature* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2004), 26.
 28. Kevin Gaines, *Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics, and Culture in the Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 2–3.
 29. For histories of culinary science and social uplift, see Laura Shapiro, *Perfection Salad: Women and Cooking at the Turn of the Century* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1986), and Harvey Levenstein, *Revolution at the Table: The Transformation of the American Diet* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003).
 30. Doris Witt, “From Fiction to Foodways: Working at the Intersections of African American Literary and Culinary Studies,” in Anne Bower, ed., *African American Foodways: Explorations of History and Culture* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 109.
 31. Bertha Turner, *The Federation Cook Book: A Collection of Tested Recipes Contributed by the Colored Women of the State of California*. Reprint. (Bedford, MA: Applewood Books, 2007), 3.
 32. Psyche Williams-Forson, *Building Houses Out of Chicken Legs: Black Women, Food, and Power* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 80.

33. Turner, *The Federation Cook Book*, 73.
34. Freda DeKnight, *A Date with a Dish: A Cookbook of American Negro Recipes* (New York: Hermitage, 1948), xiii.
35. DeKnight, *A Date with a Dish*, xiii.
36. DeKnight, *A Date with a Dish*, 47–8.
37. DeKnight, *A Date with a Dish*, 49.
38. For a rigorous analysis of the cookbook, see Katharina Vester, “A Date with a Dish: Revisiting Freda De Knight’s African American Cuisine,” in Jennifer Jensen Wallach, ed., *Dethroning the Deceitful Pork Chop: Rethinking African American Foodways from Slavery to Obama* (Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 2015), 47–60.
39. DeKnight, *A Date with a Dish*, 62.
40. Adrian Miller, *Soul Food: The Surprising Story of an American Cuisine, One Plate at a Time* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 78. Further, the Caribbean influences of DeKnight’s recipes are conversant with Arthur Schomburg’s typescript proposal for a pan-Africanist history of African American foodways, which moved from West Africa to New Orleans and New York City.
41. Sue Bailey Thurman, ed., *The Historical Cookbook of the American Negro*. Reprint (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000).
42. Thurman, *The Historical Cookbook*, 6.
43. Thurman, *The Historical Cookbook*, 8.
44. Whereas Rufus Estes’s *Good Things to Eat* (1911) and S. Thomas Bivins’s *The Southern Cookbook* (1912) catered to upscale white customers and employers, but Carver’s homey fare was meant for farming families without access to public utilities. Based on the many recipes that Carver printed in his free bulletin for black sharecroppers, Rafia Zafar argues that Carver was an early proponent of sustainable agriculture and counterculture eating habits like foraging. See Zafar, “Carver’s Food Movement,” *The Common Reader: A Journal of the Essay* (May 8, 2015).
45. Thurman, *The Historical Cookbook*, 57–8.
46. Anne Bower, “Recipes for History: The National Council of Negro Women’s Five Historical Cookbooks,” in Anne Bower, ed., *African American Foodways: Explorations of History and Culture* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 160.
47. Witt, *Black Hunger*, 80.
48. Jessica B. Harris, *High on the Hog: A Culinary Journey from Africa to America* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2011), 208.
49. *Ibid.*
50. Witt, *Black Hunger*, 159.
51. Britt Rusert, *Fugitive Science: Freedom and Empiricism in Early African American Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2017).
52. Rafia Zafar, “The Signifying Dish: Autobiography and History in Two Black Women’s Cookbooks,” *Feminist Studies* 25.2 (1999), 454.
53. Vertamae Smart-Grosvenor, *Vibration Cooking; Or, The Travel Notes of a Geechee Girl* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2011), xxxvii.
54. Smart-Grosvenor, *Vibration Cooking*, 74–5.
55. Smart-Grosvenor, *Vibration Cooking*, 77–8.
56. Witt, *Black Hunger*, 156.
57. Smart-Grosvenor, *Vibration Cooking*, 182.

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SARAH D. WALD

Farmworker Activism

In Helena María Viramontes's acclaimed farmworker novel, *Under the Feet of Jesus* (1995), the thirteen-year-old protagonist, Estrella, compares herself in frustration to the young woman featured on Sun Maid raisin boxes. As Viramontes writes:

Carrying the full basket to the paper was not like the picture on the red raisin boxes Estrella saw in the markets, not like the woman wearing a fluffy bonnet, holding out the grapes with her smiling, ruby lips, the sun a flat orange behind her. The sun was white and it made Estrella's eyes sting like an onion, and the baskets of grapes resisted her muscles, pulling their magnetic weight back to earth.¹

Estrella recognizes the labor that the Sun Maid raisin box erases is not only that of farmworkers, but also the work of the earth itself. On the box, the sun is flat whereas in Estrella's reality the "white sun" was "so mighty, it toasted the green grapes to black raisins."² Like Estrella, the white sun "worked hard."³ The grapes themselves "resisted," emphasizing not only their weight and the difficulty of Estrella's labor, but representing the earth's own agency in the process. The flat and sexualized image of Sun Maid's white woman with "smiling, ruby lips" offering her bountiful basket of grapes to the consumer with ease misrepresents not only the willing acquiescence of farmworkers to industrial agriculture but also suggests inaccurately the willing participation of the earth itself in this process. Viramontes's novel contests the erasure of both human and ecosystem labor.

In Viramontes's vision, moreover, the woman on the Sun Maid raisin box becomes a stand-in for the female grocery consumer herself. This woman is ignorant of the real conditions of agriculture. As Viramontes explains,

The woman with the red bonnet did not know this. Her knees did not sink in the hot white soil, and she did not know how to pour the baskets of grapes inside the frame gently and spread the bunches evenly on top of the newsprint

paper. She did not remove the frame, straighten her creaking knees, the bend of her back, set down another sheet of newsprint paper, reset the frame, then return to the pisca again with the empty basket, row after row, sun after sun.⁴

Viramontes's repetition here of what the Sun Main raisin woman "did not" know and the work she "did not" complete emphasizes the distance between consumer and producer. It accentuates the complexity of agricultural labor, the skill required, and the repetitive nature of the labor itself. The vision of "row after row" and "sun after sun," communicates the physical and emotional strain of repetitive manual labor as well as the ways in which farmworkers are often trapped as an underclass, not only economically but socially excluded from civil society, all outside of the view of the red-bonneted lady. Through Estrella's repudiation of the woman on the Sun Maid raisin box, Viramontes represents consumers as unaware of these conditions.

Viramontes's description recalls Ester Hernández's famous political poster, "Sun Mad" (1981). Hernandez replaces the Sun Maid raisin woman with another image, this time a skeleton holding out poisonous grapes to the consumer. Hernandez's skeleton recalls the work of Mexican political satirist José Guadalupe Posada, linking the skeletons of his political satire to her own indictment of pesticide's ill effects on farmworkers. As Jennifer Garcia Peacock has argued, the womb-like placement of the pesticide-ridden grapes in Hernandez's poster emphasizes the reproductive costs of pesticides to both consumers and producers.⁵ It suggests that purchasing grapes in the midst of the United Farm Workers' boycott is purchasing death for farmworkers. The phrase "unnaturally grown with" on Hernandez's image counters the pastoral images that industrial agriculture has continued to employ in its advertisements.⁶

Like Viramontes, Hernandez reveals the intertwined economic, emotional, and environmental violence of contemporary food production by showing how the pastoral images used in food advertising further marginalize the experiences of those laboring within the food system. As such, both works participate in a long history of cultural resistance to farmworker exploitation. Farmworker literature in the US, whether poetry, drama, fiction, or non-fiction prose, has often emphasized worker exploitation as an indictment not only of the food system but also of the larger economic and political systems of the United States. As in *Under the Feet of Jesus*, the environmental costs of the food system cannot be separated from the social costs to people at the bottom of that system.

Drawing on the work of Chicana ecocritic Priscilla Solis Ybarra and Latinx literary scholar David J. Vázquez, I assert that twentieth and twenty-first

century US farmworker literature not only exposes the systems of power and privilege through which farmworkers and ecosystems are exploited, but also positions farmworkers as conveyors of environmental knowledge.⁷ In US literature and culture, farmworker epistemologies offer a critical vantage point on both the industrial food system and the larger systems of colonialism, capitalism, and racism upon which the industrial food system relies.⁸

Jeffersonian Agrarianism in Farmworker Literature

Farmworker literature in the United States has long drawn upon the contradictions between the United States' fascination with Jeffersonian agrarianism and the realities of the nation's reliance on exploitative conditions of farm labor. Thomas Jefferson's Query XIX in Notes on the State of Virginia made a case for a nation full of farmers, proclaiming farmers as "the chosen people of God" and thus central to nation's own Godly destiny. Jefferson emphasized farmers' self-reliance. He presented farmers as economically independent and contended that such economic independence led to moral virtue and political independence, both necessary qualities for a democracy. He understood this agrarian virtue in opposition to the corrupting dependencies of cities and manufacturing. Thus, Jeffersonian agrarianism emerged at the nexus of two literary traditions, the georgic with its emphasis on hard agricultural labor and the pastoral with its romantic vision of country virtue working to indict urban vice.

However, Jeffersonian agrarianism is a problematic ideology for social and environmental justice. Jeffersonian agrarianism fed Manifest Destiny, from the Louisiana Purchase to the Homestead Act. Creating property for farmers required wresting land from indigenous peoples across the continent while overlooking the plantation system of slavery that contributed, along with stolen land, to the emergent nation's wealth. In this way, Jeffersonian agrarianism is an ideal that has always relied on a settler colonial logic that justifies environmental violence and indigenous dispossession. It also renders invisible the labor of women, enslaved peoples, tenant farmers, and other farmworkers who do not own property while celebrating an ideal citizenship and selective democracy based on white property-ownership.⁹

Despite, or perhaps because of, its logic of possession, its embrace of citizenship, and its "possessive investment" in whiteness, to borrow George Lipsitz's phrase, Jeffersonian agrarianism continues to cast its shadow over contemporary US agricultural literature, a literature that has often centered and celebrated the farmer while rendering the farmworker invisible.¹⁰ As an ideology, Jeffersonian agrarianism exerts a powerful influence over the contemporary food movement and writers who extol the moral

virtues of family farms from Wendell Berry to Joel Salatin.¹¹ These neo-agrarian writers embrace a form of local and sustainable agriculture not in opposition to urban industrialization but to the industrialization of agriculture, itself. They situate the family farm as a bulwark in the defense of American democracy. To Jefferson's formulation, they grant the farmer the virtue of environmental sustainability. The farmer, in the neo-agrarianism of the alternative food movement, upholds the farmer as steward of the nation's moral, physical, and environmental health.¹²

US farmworker literature, which we can distinguish from literature that primarily focuses on farmers, often highlights the distance between the ideal of Jeffersonian agrarianism and the reality of farmworkers' exploitation.¹³ As opposed to the idealized agricultural ladder in which farm hands build capital to become farmers themselves, farmworker literature, especially during the Great Depression, depicts farmers dispossessed of their lands and trapped instead as farmworkers. Farmworkers, whether former farmers or not, are alienated from the land. Caught in factories in the fields, they are as oppressed as urban, industrial workers are and are without hope of property ownership or economy independence.¹⁴ In such texts, farmworkers' poor work conditions illustrate the ways the material and cultural logic of capitalism prevented or interrupted the conditions necessary for Jeffersonian agrarianism, leading to failure of American democracy for US food systems.

Yet, twentieth and twenty-first century US farmworker literature often goes beyond an indictment of Jeffersonian agrarianism's failure to materialize as agricultural reality. Unlike neo-agrarian literature that celebrates the small farmer or the family farm, such as Wendell Berry's "A Defense of the Family Farm," US farmworker literature often calls for alternatives to Jefferson's property-owning small farmer.¹⁵ In such works as John Steinbeck's novel *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939) and Carey McWilliams's exposé *Factories in the Field* (1939), the loss of family farms becomes fodder for socio-economic alternatives such as collective ownership.¹⁶ In such literature, the farmer is replaced by the grower/owner who is alienated from the land and lacks moral suasion. Authors like Steinbeck, McWilliams, and Viramontes consequently depict the farmworker, not the farmer, as the true heir to agrarian virtue. Often, in US farmworker literature, the farmworker transcends the possessive impulse, belonging to the land rather than having the land belong to them.¹⁷ As Ybarra, writing about the Chicano/a literary tradition states, "migrant farmworker literature shows this community's rejection of capital's attempt to alienate them from the land. The migrant farmworkers in these writings assert a community with one another and with nature."¹⁸ In works by authors like Tomás Rivera, Cherríe Moraga, and Viramontes, Ybarra argues,

community and environmental values live in the hearts and minds of farmworkers rather than farmers.

California as Agricultural Eden

California holds a special place in US farmworker literature. Much of this is due to California's history of land, labor, and colonialism and its ideological place in nationalist mythology prior to The Great Depression. All land in California was doubly stolen, first by Spain from native inhabitants and then by the United States from Mexico in the Mexican–American War of 1848. Whereas much land elsewhere in the United States was claimed by farmers through the Homestead Act and other mechanisms envisioned at least partly as bringing Jeffersonian ideology to life, in California, land grants consolidated large parcels of land while under Spanish rule. These land grants then moved from Spanish to Mexican to US American ownership without being broken into smaller parcels. Thus, whereas many stories of twentieth century agrarian life focus on the consolidation of small farms into larger industrial units, in California, as McWilliams declared, such small farms never existed: "The ownership changed from Mexican grantee to American capitalist; the grant as such remained."¹⁹ As McWilliams's impressively researched exposé *Factories in the Field* explains, further consolidation happened due to government corruption including special acts of legislature to benefit large landowners. Small farmers had no chance. In California, Jeffersonian agriculture never took root.

Whereas Black slaves and then Black sharecroppers dominated the agriculture workforce across the South, California relied in the nineteenth century on Native Americans as workers and then on a series of immigrant groups, including Chinese, Japanese, Indian, Filipino, and Mexican workers.²⁰ During the Great Depression, white farmworkers came for a brief period to dominate California's fields. Progressives like Steinbeck and McWilliams, believing that a broader US public might be more sympathetic to white workers, and that white workers, without threat of deportation, would be more militant (a false assumption), took advantage of this shift in the racial make-up of California's fields to highlight the rise of industrial agriculture as well as its environmental and social costs.²¹ During the 1960s, the United Farm Workers (UFW), which was founded due to the radicalism and organizing of both Filipino and Mexican farmworkers, came to occupy a significant place in the Chicano movement. The increasing dominance of Mexican workers in the fields along with the charismatic and strategic leadership of César Chavez led California's farmworkers movement to occupy a significant and central place in national Civil

Rights discourse. The UFW's concern with pesticides positioned it as an early model of what would become known as environmental justice while its grape boycott presaged the consumer-focus of the sustainable foods movement.²² Indeed, the cultural advocacy around farmworker labor in California became one of the hubs of what Latinx literature scholar Randy Ontiveros terms an emergent "Chicanx environmentalism."²³

It is not only California's particular history of land ownership and immigrant labor that lends it special valence in farmworker literature. California has also long been envisioned in the US American imagination as a form of Eden, a bountiful garden that resulted from the nation's blessings. To those who followed the edict of "Go West, Young Man," California became the ultimate West. Its failures carried forth a particular national morality tale.²⁴ As geographer Don Mitchell explains, "Like tales in the Bible, [depictions of California's landscapes] are metonymic representations of huge stories, the trajectories of which become morality plays for America (and perhaps the rest of the world) as a whole."²⁵ Throughout the twentieth century, representations of environmental and social injustices in California's fields played out on a national stage and served through their confrontations with Jeffersonian agrarianism to question the nation's future.²⁶

Farmworker Literature of the Great Depression

During the Great Depression, stories about displaced white Dust Bowl farmers transformed into exploited farmworkers in California came to dominate the national imaginary. Farmworker literature of this period indicted industrial agriculture for its distance from Jeffersonian agrarianism and emphasized its environmental as well as social harms. Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* is the most famous of these works. Others touchstone depictions of farmworker exploitation from this period include Dorothea Lange's photographs, such as "Migrant Mother" (1936), McWilliams's *Factories in the Field*, and Woodie Guthrie's music, including the song, "The Ballad of Tom Joad" (1940).²⁷ Farmworker literature of the Dust Bowl not only emphasized industrial agriculture's harms but also farmworkers' environmental and social awareness. This is the case with white author Sanora Babb's novel *Whose Names are Unknown* (written 1939, published 1996) and Filipino author Carlos Bulosan's fictionalized memoir *America Is in the Heart* (1946).²⁸

Babb's novel, similar in many ways to *The Grapes of Wrath*, follows the internal migration to California of the Dunne family and others who lost their land in Oklahoma as the combined result of greedy bankers and the environmental catastrophe of drought and dust storms. Babb herself was

an Oklahoman, and she included in her novel portions of her mother's letters with firsthand descriptions of the Dust Bowl. The Dunne family spends the second half of the novel as farmworkers in California where, under the leadership of both a Filipino farmworker and a Black farmworker, they join a failed strike. Random House was set to publish the novel when *The Grapes of Wrath* was released. Babb's book was pulled by the press as a marketing decision, one particularly tragic as there is evidence that Steinbeck had access to Babb's notes as he was writing his famous work.²⁹

One of the notable differences between Babb's text and Steinbeck's is the prescient ecofeminism of the former. As literary scholar Erin Battat has argued, Babb's novel parallels equitable marriages between men and women with equitable partnerships between humans and nature.³⁰ The novel gestures to a future when neither women nor land will be property in its considerations of alternatives to both the individualism and property ownership of Jeffersonian agrarianism and the industrial model of Great Depression. Before his dispossession, Milt Dunne thinks, "I made something with the soil, together we made a crop grow in order and loveliness."³¹ The earth exists not as an object in the text but as an agent. Milt's father, Old Man Dunne ponders, "The earth was generous and could give him his needs, and stir his heart and soul."³² Partnership, respect, and agency undergirds the relationship between farmer and farmland.

Babb blames Dust Bowl farmers' displacement not only on the greed of bankers, like the Brennerman family in the novel, but also on the ecological devastation that resulted from overproduction. Echoing the analysis popularized by Pare Lorentz's film *The Plow that Broke the Plains* (1936), Babb writes, "It was a mistake to plow the plains in a land of little rain and wind, wind, wind, and the mistake resulted in dust, which covered fields and buildings, killed people and animals, and drove farmers out with nothing."³³ In the novel, displaced farmers carry this ecological knowledge with them. Through the course of the novel, the Dunes and other white farmworkers, learning from farmworkers of color, recognize that addressing their labor exploitation requires not only restored ecological balance, but also racial and gender equality.

Bulosan's *America Is in the Heart* similarly emphasizes a love for the earth as central to the alternative agricultural future it envisions. In contrast to Babb's ecofeminist tendencies, Bulosan's work grounds its love for the land in its critique of US imperialism in the Philippines and the consequent racialized exploitation Filipinos experience as migrant workers in the USA. As literary scholar Chris Vials argues, Bulosan drew on the narrative tropes of yeoman farmers' land loss popular in the USA to depict the dispossession

of the narrator Carlos's family in the Philippines. In doing so, Vials argues, Bulosan renders the consequences of US imperialism legible for a US public.³⁴

Like Babb's ecologically aware Dust Bowl farmers, Bulosan depicts an environmental awareness among the Philippines' peasantry. In *America Is in the Heart*, Carlos describes his father as, "A stubborn peasant like his ancestors before him, [who] had always believed that life should be rooted in the soil."³⁵ In a conversation Bulosan narrates between his fictionalized self, Carlos, and a fictionalized version of Sanora Babb, named Alice Odell, Carlos realizes the similarities of their family's displacements from the earth. As Bulosan writes, "Then it came to me that her life and my life were the same, terrified by the same sources; they had only happened in two different countries and to two people."³⁶ Ecological and social awareness for Bulosan, key to the building of a new world, emerge from the vantage point of the colonized Filipino subject laboring in the United States.

Authors like Babb and Bulosan share with Steinbeck an indictment of US capitalism, and the banking system in particular, as responsible for the alienation between people and land. The Joads, the Dunnes, and Carlos share a love of the earth. Farmworkers, as former peasants and farmers, have an ecological awareness that owners, bankers, and wealthy farmers lack. These authors represent farmworkers not only to protest labor exploitation, but also to emphasize the intertwined social and ecological harms of industrial agriculture. In these works, moreover, the ills of US industrial agriculture are enmeshed within larger socio-economic and environmental injustices.

Farmworker Literature as Chicanx Environmentalism

The cultural arm of the farmworkers movement that arose in the 1960s with the UFW under the leadership of Cesar Chavez, Dolores Huerta, Larry Itliong, Philip Vera Cruz, and others owed its rise in part to the social movements of the period, especially the Chicano Movement and mid-century environmentalism.³⁷ Farmworker literature and other cultural productions often position migrant farmworker lives as proxy for a larger Chicanx experience. According to Ybarra, the migrant farmworker novel is "arguably a subgenre of Chicana/o writing." Among these iconic migrant farmworker works are Raymond Barrio's *The Plum Plum Pickers* (1969), Tomás Rivera's *Y No Se Lo Tragó La Tierra* (1971), the plays of Luis Valdez's Teatro Campesino such as "Quinta Temporada" (1966), and Cherrie Moraga's plays "Heroes and Saints" (1994) and "Watsonville" (1996). The farmworkers' movement, moreover, provides the central backstory to Lucha Corpi's

Cactus Blood (1995), the second in her Gloria Damasco mystery series, while contemporary Chicanx science fiction such as Beatrice Pita and Rosaura Sánchez's novel *Lunar Braceros 2125–2148* (2009) and Alex Rivera's film *Sleep Dealer* (2008) position migrant farm labor at the nexus of social and environmental injustice. Together, such literary and cinematic works depict the socio-economic conditions of farm labor as central to Chicanx identity and political consciousness.³⁸

Ybarra positions such works as part of a tradition of "goodlife writing." Drawing on Latin American politics, Ybarra coins the term to capture the unique Mexican American relationship to the land that emerges in Chicanx literature and culture and that is distinct from mainstream (white) environmentalism. According to Ybarra, goodlife writing integrates the natural environment into community life and upholds the values of "simplicity, sustenance, dignity, and respect."³⁹ Ybarra insists that we see such values not as inherent or essential parts of Mexican American culture or identity, but rather as emerging over time in Mexican American literature and cultural production as response to and in resistance to experiences of colonial alienation to land (dispossession) and colonial racial hierarchies. Ybarra credits Chicana feminist writers with rejecting the reclamation of stolen lands as their primary goal, replacing it with an ethics of transcending possession. In this formulation, the transcendence of possession extends earlier forms of goodlife values and significantly contributes to global environmental thinking.

Chicanx farmworker literature participates in this goodlife writing tradition, suggesting that farmworkers' experience offer forms of embodied knowledge that counter the racial, gendered, and colonial hierarchies that allow environmental exploitation. *Under the Feet of Jesus* is exemplary of this tradition. As David J. Vázquez argues, Viramontes's novel posits the environmental literacy of farmworkers as an integral strategy of resistance and one "based on a notion of empathetic identification."⁴⁰ *Under the Feet of Jesus* reveals an environmental literacy that links social justice with environmental justice concerns. According to Vázquez, *Under the Feet of Jesus* contends that, "environmental injustice functions as an integral aspect of the racialization of farmworkers."⁴¹ Moreover, Vázquez writes, "part of how characters in *Under the Feet of Jesus* decode and understand their world is through the precarity of their environmental situations."⁴² The environmental literacy of Viramontes's characters thus allows them to understand their larger place not only in the industrial food system but also in the larger socio-economic system governing society. As literary critic Paula Moya contends, Viramontes's farmworkers' view from the margins offers significant insight into the larger socio-economic world that they inhabit.⁴³

Environmental humanities scholar Janet Fiskio terms this farmworker view of the world as an “agrarianism from the margins” and reads it as counter to the rooted and sometimes essentialized “sense of place” that is at work in the neo-agrarian writings of Wendell Berry. Berry, according to Fiskio, understands environmental sustainability as emerging from a long-standing relationship to place, a stance that denies environmental ethics to migrant farmworkers and others excluded from the property ownership central to Jeffersonian agrarianism. In contrast, Fiskio argues that in Viramontes’s novel place is “an amalgam of social location, experiential knowledge formulated through labor, the industrial landscape of the Central Valley, and alternative family arrangements.”⁴⁴ This knowledge provide grounds for Estrella’s ethical agency. Rather than perceiving the long-time commitment to one piece of land as producing virtue and inspiring moral action, a stance that Jeffersonian-influenced authors like Berry embrace, Estrella, in Fiskio’s interpretation, “establishes instead a practice of responsibility and care for her community on this shifting ground.”⁴⁵

These interpretations of *Under the Feet of Jesus* by Fiskio, Moya, Vázquez, and Ybarra share an emphasis on the ways in which representations of the farmworker experience provide knowledge not only of the larger food system in the United States, but also of larger global systems of exploitation. In this way, we can interpret a novel like *Under the Feet of Jesus* as conversing with Food Studies scholars’ engagement with labor, food security, immigration, and environmental sustainability. Food Studies scholarship often emphasizes a food systems approach that engages and includes labor as a central component.⁴⁶ Farm labor is a central part of contemporary food systems analysis and is a central pillar on which both the industrial and alternative food systems rely. *Under the Feet of Jesus*, like other US farmworker literature, theorizes the conditions of exploitation and resistance of farm labor in the food system, including both the economic and environmental violence inherent in the US and global food system.

Food Justice scholars attend to the inequalities, the uneven distribution of privileges and harms, across the food system from production to consumption. Viramontes’s novel, too, traverses this ground. *Under the Feet of Jesus* situates farmworkers as food consumers, highlighting their food insecurity and the difficulty of their access to the high quality produce that they harvest for others. In one scene, Estrella’s mother, Petra, abandoned by her husband, struggles to feed her children. Estrella must try to calm and entertain her hungry siblings by making a drum out of the “full of empty” Quaker Oatmeal box.⁴⁷ In other scenes, Viramontes emphasizes the poor quality of the produce available to Petra and the detailed calculations that the characters must go through in order to afford to eat. In the grocery store, for

example, Petra returns El Pato tomato sauce, Carnation milk, and a jar of Tang after checking prices while also calculating how much the special on Spam will save her.⁴⁸ Thus, the novel speaks to Food Justice conversations about equitable access to healthy foods and the uneven landscape of food availability.⁴⁹ In this way, Viramontes refuses to separate the characters' experiences as food producers from their experiences as food consumers. Their medical and educational neglect, poor housing, and reduced access to appealing foods exists in the novel as a structural problem linked not simply to lack of money but as part of the larger and more complex material conditions of agriculture and farmworkers' social invisibility.

Under the Feet of Jesus emphasizes the uncertainty and vulnerability that farmworkers face. This appears through repeated references to precarity throughout the text and especially in the novel's opening and closing. The first line of the novel asks, "Had they been heading to the barn along? Estrella did not know."⁵⁰ The novel ends with Estrella on the roof of that very barn. Uncertainty, ambiguity, and vulnerability shape this ending. Will the police come for Estrella? Will Perfecto abandon the pregnant Petra? Will Alejo, Estrella's love interest who was left at an emergency room with pesticide poisoning, live? Will Estrella ever escape the fields? This uncertainty reflects and creates farmworkers' vulnerability. As Viramontes writes, "It was always a question of work, and work depended on the harvest, the car running, their health, the conditions of the road, how long the money held out, and the weather, which meant they could depend on nothing."⁵¹

The novel traces various types of economic and environmental violence inherent to contemporary agricultural production. Alejo's pesticide poisoning is the most explicit conveyor of this economic and environmental violence. Viramontes does not position Alejo's pesticide poisoning as exemplary. Rather, the characters in the novel are able to name the illness, "daño of the fields," or hurt of the fields, suggesting its commonality.⁵² Characters throughout the text worry about birth defects as a result of their landscape's toxicity. The pregnant Petra wonders whether "the poisons of the fields [will] harden in its [the fetus's] tiny little veins."⁵³ Throughout *Under the Feet of Jesus*, environmental toxicity is linked to loss of voice, or the silence and invisibility of farmworker contributions to society. Estrella and her friend Maxine wonder, "You think 'cause of the water our babies are gonna come out with no mouth or something?"⁵⁴ Later, Petra threatens Estrella, "Is this what you want . . . a child born sin labios? Without a -mouth?"⁵⁵ The reproductive violence of such birth defects cannot be separated from the psychological violence of farm labor itself, the silencing of workers and the invisibility of their conditions.

Pesticide poisoning becomes an emergent theme in US farmworker literature alongside the rise of modern environmentalism in mid-century. Following World War II, a chemical industry focused on military products shifted focus to domestic agriculture. There was a transference of war chemicals to pesticide use in the period following World War II.⁵⁶ Rachel Carson's documentation of the dangers of rampant pesticide use in *Silent Spring* (1962) increased public awareness of their dangers. The UFW, who grounded their concern with pesticides in the particular vulnerabilities that farmworkers faced, mobilized popular concern by suggesting the dangers consumers also faced from their agricultural use. They built on the growing concern with environmental toxicity in the years prior to and immediately following the first Earth Day (1970) to build support for their grape boycott and their larger unionization campaign.⁵⁷

Alejo's experience of pesticide poisoning is perhaps the central conflict in Viramontes's novel. Yet, Viramontes does not isolate it from the myriad other sufferings of migrant farmworkers. Viramontes, for example, also draws our attention to heat stroke. Early in the novel, Estrella's little brother Ricky finds her in the fields. As Viramontes describes, "He looked feverish and she put down her basket of grapes and pressed the water bottle to his lips, tilted it to the sky, asked him where is your hat."⁵⁸ Estrella says to Ricky, "You don't know how to work with the sun yet" suggesting the commonness of the threat as well as the knowledge migrant farmworkers require to survive.⁵⁹ According to anthropologist Sarah Horton, "Heatstroke is the leading cause of work-related death for farmworkers. Members of this occupational group bear a higher risk of heatstroke than outdoor workers in any other industry, including construction."⁶⁰ Geographer Ruth Wilson Gilmore has usefully and provocatively defines racism as "the state-sanctioned or extralegal production and exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerability to premature death."⁶¹ Given that, according to the CDC, foreign born Latinx men account for 71% of all farmworker death from heat stroke from 1992 to 2006, we can understand heatstroke as a form of racism to which farmworkers are exposed.

Viramontes's novel delves into these intertwined vulnerabilities and both their bodily and emotional consequences for her characters. On one hand, farm labor is described as physically arduous and, combined with the other factors shaping characters' lives, it ages them prematurely; "the nature of their lives had a way of putting twenty years on a face."⁶² Yet the manifestations are not just physical. As Viramontes details, "Estrella carried the full basket with the help of a sore hip and kneeled before the clusters of grapes. The muscles of her back coiled like barbed wire and clawed against whatever movement she made . . . She opened her eyes and spread the grapes and did not cry."⁶³ This

passage moves between Estrella's physical suffering and her emotional suffering. Similarly, the text constantly reminds us that Petra's legs are "shackled by varicose veins."⁶⁴ Petra is thirty-five. Her varicose veins not only cause her physical suffering, but also reflect the ways the conditions of her life trap her in the field. Using the language of prison, "shackled," Viramontes emphasizes the imbrication of various forms of physical and emotional harm that result from the structural factors facing farmworkers, structural factors we can understand as gendered forms of environmental violence.

Medical anthropologists focused on farmworkers, including Horton and Seth Holmes, emphasize that increased risk of premature death and other forms of suffering are not a natural result of the forms of labor performed by farmworkers, but rather, in Horton's words, "an organized catastrophe that has been generated by myriad public policies."⁶⁵ Horton emphasizes the health vulnerability produced by layers of socio-economic precariousness, what she describes as the allostatic load of racism and which I term the allostatic load of environmental racism. As Horton explains, allostatic load is a term scholars use to capture "the physiological pathways through which chronic social stress is embodied."⁶⁶ In turn, Holmes, drawing on the work of Pierre Bourdieu, emphasizes the symbolic violence of farm work. Symbolic violence is the ways that social asymmetries are internalized and naturalized. The racial hierarchies, social vulnerability, and labor exploitation of farmworkers are normalized and naturalized not only among farmers and white community members, but among farmworkers themselves. As Holmes explains, "Naturalization occur[s] via the racialization of bodies and the perception that certain categories of ethnic bodies belonged in certain occupational positions."⁶⁷ According to Holmes, language and representation are key sites through which to confront and transform farmworker suffering. Attention to the symbolic order must accompany on-the-ground solidarity.

Viramontes's novel serves as a representational site to expose the allostatic load of environmental racism in ways that denaturalize and challenge the perceived social order. Viramontes links the health issues that her characters face, the violence on them and the land, to a larger political analysis. The explicit violence and possible death that Alejo faces is only one articulation of the systemic violence that molds farmworker life. These harms are multiplied through poor living conditions, food scarcity, physical labor, and psychological suffering. In one of the overarching metaphors of Viramontes's novel, the crushed bones of farmworkers fuel not only industrial agriculture but also larger system of exploitation and oppression. Consider the scene most scholars read as the crucial moment of Estrella's political transformation:

She remembered the tar pits. Energy money, the fossilized bones of energy matter. How bones made oil and oil made gasoline. The oil was made from their bones, and it was their bones that kept the nurse's car from not halting on some highway, kept her on her way to Daisyfield to pick up her boys at six. It was their bones that kept the air conditioning in the cars humming, that kept them moving on the long dotted line on the map. Their bones. Why couldn't the nurse see that? Estrella had figured it out: the nurse owed them as much as they owed her.⁶⁸

Estrella realizes that the fuel that keeps the petroculture of twentieth century capital going is created out of the crushed bones of migrant farmworkers. In this metaphor, the bodies of Estrella's friends and family are exploited in ways similar to the earth itself. Farmworkers' labor, like fossil fuels, constitute a form of energy through which the comfort of some depends upon the suffering of others.⁶⁹ Viramontes thus situates farmworkers at the crux of larger social and environmental injustices, not just of the industrial food system, but of the systems of racism, capitalism, and colonialism through which the industrial food system functions.

Conclusion: Farmworker Literature and Food Sovereignty

Cheap food in the United States is dependent largely on cheap labor. US farmworker literature often critiques not only the harsh conditions of farm labor, but also how those conditions speak to larger inequities of the industrial food system and the system of global capitalism and colonialism through which the industrial food system operates. The industrial food system today cannot be disentangled from the intersecting effects of global capitalism and colonialism, extended through neo-liberal practices and policies. In exposing the ills of this system and depicting farmworker epistemologies in opposition to its social and ecological harms, US farmworker literature can be situated among a larger tradition of protest literature. As Eric Holt-Giménez argues, "The rise of today's international food sovereignty movement, which has also taken root among farmers, farmworkers, and foodworkers in the United States, is part of a long history of resistance to violent, capitalist dispossession and exploitation of land, water, markets, labor, and seeds."⁷⁰ The ecological and social knowledge conveyed in US farmworker literature from Sanora Babb's *Whose Names are Unknown* and Carlos Bulosan's *America Is in the Heart* to Helena María Viramontes's *Under the Feet of Jesus* is likewise part of this long history of resistance.

Notes

1. Helena María Viramontes, *Under the Feet of Jesus* (New York: Plume, 1995), 49–50.
2. Ibid., 50.
3. Ibid., 49.
4. Ibid., 50.
5. Jennifer Garcia Peacock, “Sun Ma(i)d: Art, Activism, and Environment in Ester Hernández’s Central Valley,” *Latinx Environmentalisms: Place, Justice and the Decolonial*, eds. Sarah D. Wald, David J. Vázquez, Priscilla Solis Ybarra, and Sarah Jaquette Ray (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2019), 104–30.
6. For more on Hernandez, see Curtis Marez, *Farm Worker Futurism: Speculative Technologies of Resistance* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2016), 143–53.
7. Priscilla Solis Ybarra, *Writing the Goodlife: Mexican American Literature and the Environment* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 2016); David J. Vázquez, “Their Bones Kept Them Moving: Latinx Studies, Helena María Viramontes’s Under the Feet of Jesus, and the Cross-Currents of Ecocriticism,” *Contemporary Literature* 58.2 (2017), 362–92.
8. I focus primarily on literature here. For farmworker visual culture, see Marez.
9. For critiques of Jeffersonian Agrarianism and its influence on the alternative food movement, see Patricia Allen, *Together at the Table: Sustainability and Sustenance in the American Agrifood System* (University Park, PA: Penn State, 2004), 135; Janet Fiskio, “Unsettling Ecocriticism: Rethinking Agrarianism, Place and Citizenship,” *American Literature* 84.2 (2002), 301–25; Kimberly K. Smith, *Wendell Berry and the Agrarian Tradition: A Common Grace* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2003); Kimberly K. Smith, *African American Environmental Thought* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press 2007), 39–44; Sarah D. Wald, *The Nature of California: Race, Citizenship, and Farming since the Dust Bowl* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2016).
10. See George Lipstiz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity and Politics* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2008). For more on possession, see Aileen Moreton-Robinson, *The White Possessive: Property, Power, and Indigenous Sovereignty* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2015).
11. See Wendell Berry, *The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture* (New York: Avon, 1977); Wes Jackson, *New Roots for Agriculture* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1980); Michael Pollan, *Omnivore’s Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals* (New York: Penguin, 2000); Joel Salatin, *Folks, This Ain’t Normal: A Farmer’s Advice for Happier Hens, Healthier People, and A Better World* (New York: Center Street, 2011).
12. Allen, *Together at the Table*, 137–142.
13. For compelling readings of the farmer in U.S. literature, see William Conlogue’s *Working the Garden: American Writers and the Industrialization of Agriculture* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Allison Carruth, *Global Appetites: American Power and the Literature of Food* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

14. As an example, see Carey McWilliams, *Factories in the Field* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, 1939).
15. Wendell Berry, “A Defense of the Family Farm,” *Bringing in to the Table: On Farming and Food* (Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint, 2009), 31–48.
16. Wald, *The Nature of California*, 31–33, 64–65.
17. McWilliams, *Factories in the Field*; John Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath: Text and Criticism*, edited by Peter Lisca (New York: Penguin, 1997); Viramontes, *Under the Feet of Jesus*.
18. Ybarra, *Writing the Goodlife*, 122.
19. McWilliams, *Factories in the Field*, 15.
20. See McWilliams, *Factories in the Field*, and Cletus E. Daniel, *Bitter Harvest: A History of California Farmworkers, 1870–1941* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1982).
21. Devra Weber, *Dark Sweat, White Gold: California Cotton and the New Deal* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994); Wald, *The Nature of California*, 36–9.
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I4

ANNE ANLIN CHENG

Digesting Asian America

“We are the sinister and the virtuous and everything in between . . . ”

—*On Such a Full Sea*, Chang-rae Lee

The racialized body in America is simultaneously edible and undigested. This paradox is particularly true for Asian/Asian American bodies that are at once culturally delicious and politically inassimilable, especially when those bodies have been feminized, aestheticized and otherwise made culturally consumable. In *Racial Indigestion: Eating Bodies in the 19th Century*, Kyla Tompkins offers us an unforgettable account of the consolidation of whiteness as a nationalist mythology through the erotics of consumption. Nineteenth-century American “eating culture,” as she puts it, is a site of racial anxiety and its management through the ingestion, both literal and metaphoric, of racialized minorities (blacks and Asians) seen as “the bottom of the food chain.”¹ But, as she observes, this consumption does not go down easily, producing what she calls a “*queer alimentarity*” with unwieldy implications for how we think about the materialization of foods and of race.²

The association between Asian Americanness and Asian foodways is quite facile. It is not hard for the majority of Americans to conflate these perpetual “strangers from a different shore” with the exotic foods that they presumably bring and represent.³ And we often find Asian American subjects themselves playing up to this association in a gambit for some forms of cultural recognition. (Consider how many efforts of self-representation in showcases of “American multiculturalism” so often take the shape of food fairs.) This collapse between cultural identity and consumability – what literary critic Wenying Xu has identifies as our appetite for “eating identities” – has been a strategic move for both regressive and progressive agendas.⁴ In fact, the most digestible thing about Asian Americanness today for mainstream America is arguably by way of connections to foods, from the good mouth feel of soft chewy babbas to the visual and gustatory delights of sushi to the comforting stand-by of General Tso’s Chicken. As Amy Bentley points out, the conflation of consuming foreign

foods with consuming foreign others has long produced the “culinary tourism” of American culture and its celebration of multiculturalism.⁵ This is why, even as rabid anti-immigrant and anti-Chinese sentiments brew in the popular culture today, Asian cuisine remains nonetheless some of the most popular and quotidian fares, digested as at once strangely foreign and American.

At the same time, the deliciousness of the Asiatic in the American racial diet has always been offset by an equally expressive disgust. People of Asian descent in America have historically been linked to rats and dogs, lowly and despicable animals that Asians were supposed to both resemble *and* to imbibe. In the nineteenth century, at the height of the anti-Chinese sentiments in the United States, the Chinese were considered pests and pestilential even as they were often accused of and reviled for themselves eating household pests and pets.⁶ This nineteenth-century “advertising/trade card” (Fig. 14.1) advertises a pest control product that claims to be as effective as a “Chinaman” who eats rats.

Given this painful history, it is all the more pressing that we reconsider the relationship between notions of food, consumption, and “Asianness” in America, and it is critical to explore how Asian American authors engage with notions of food, consumption, and their own corporeal *and* social relations to these concepts. Eating and culinary metaphors in turn play a huge role in Asian American literary cultural production – from Louis Chu’s *Eat a Bowl of Tea* (1961) to Jessica Hagedorn’s *Dogeaters* (1990) to Amy Tan’s *The Joy Luck Club* (1989) to Monique Truong’s *The Book of Salt* (2003), just to name a few – not because Asians in America and Asian Americans like to eat (after all, who does not?) but because they occupy a particularly liminal space between eating and being eaten in the American cultural imaginary.

Years ago I spoke of American racial dynamics as structurally “melancholic,” a multi-layered and imbricated process of psychical cannibalism whereby dominant white subjects feeds on the racial other, while the latter is forced to consume a dominant white ideal as well as digest their own lostness.⁷ This psychical drama animates and stages Asian American subjects’ complex place in the American racial diet and profoundly impacts the conditions of their corporeality. Shuttling between the impossible yet endless conundrum of affirmation and denigration, recognition and reification, “Asian/Americaness” is less an identity and more a predicament of naming and of figuration stuck in the gullet of American polity: a thing of fantasy and overmaterialization that American multiculturalism can neither swallow nor eject.

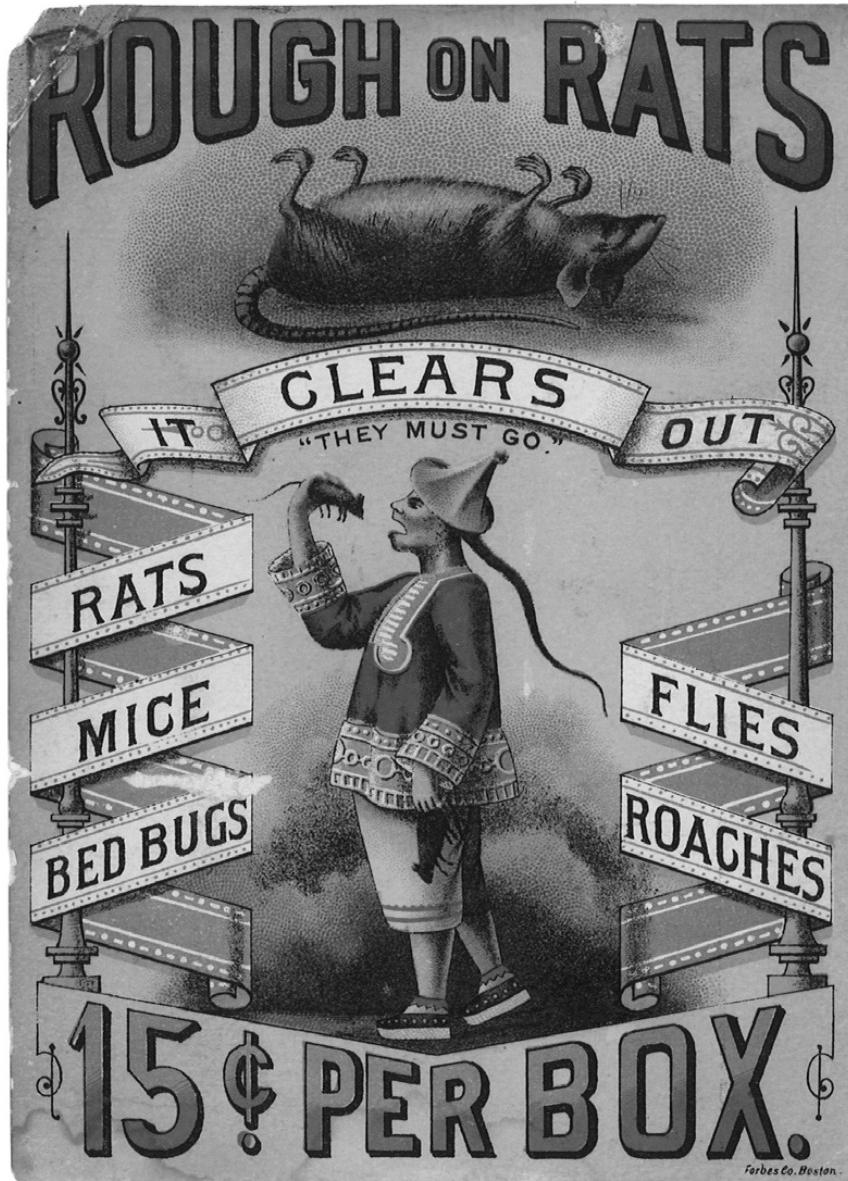


Fig. 14.1 “Rough on Rats” advertisement. (Circa 1870–90) Courtesy of the Daniel K. E. Ching Collection, Chinese Historical Society of America.

So how should we approach the queer alimentarity of Asian Americaneness? Few critics have written about the significance of food in Asian American culture beyond noting its ubiquity as stand-in for

ethnic identity. The exception to this oversight is Wenying Xu's *Eating Identities: Reading Food in Asian American Literature* (2007) which connects the trope and spaces of food, cooking, hunger, and appetite in Asian American literature to a wide range of identity issues such as race/ethnicity, gender/sexuality, class, and diaspora.⁸ Here I extend Xu's invitation to theorize food and consumption in Asian American literature by attending to food, not as an expression of identity, but as that which profoundly destabilizes (and perhaps even dissolves) identity and by questioning the association between food as matter and race as matter. Thus, instead of turning to a sociology of food and society or to literary texts that more explicitly address the theme of food and eating, I want to turn our attention to the larger question of an ecology of consumption and how the racial logic feeds and/or contaminates concepts of social and ecological health even without racial naming.

By way of launching this larger conversation, I offer a preliminary reading of Chang-rae Lee's novel *On Such a Full Sea*, not because it explicitly addresses "Asian Americanness" – it does not – but because it unravels "Asian Americanness" precisely as a *crisis of mattering and ingestion* in the affective ecology of American racialization.⁹ A novel about the tension between survival and sustainability on many levels – human, political, environmental – *On Such a Full Sea* pushes us to rethink the terms that we imagine to be vital to notions of political recognition and freedom.

On Such a Full Sea is Lee's most and least Asian American novel. This paradox, I will argue in what follows, turns precisely on the novel's intricate meditation on the nature of racial/ethnic materiality. If we think about it, is it any surprise that a celebrated Asian American author whose work has always invoked yet unraveled racial expectations should now produce a darkly chilling novel where identificatory discrimination appears at once obsolete and yet profoundly active? The novel takes place in the distant future in the continent of North America but where national borders seem to have been erased after some form of global catastrophic event. This catastrophic event, it would seem, was not human war exactly, but some kind of ecological disaster or, simply, decay: "a haze that you can almost smell, a smell, you think, you don't want to breathe in" (4). In this new geography, we find our protagonist, a young woman named Fan, living and working in a settlement called B-Mor (what was once Baltimore), some neighboring communities called Charter Villages, and vast and unsafe lands in between called "out there."

The opening sentence of the novel quickly does away with the categories of racial, ethnic, and national differences to which we are so used:

It is known where we come from, but no one much cares about things like that anymore. We think, Why bother? Except for a lucky few, everyone is from someplace but that someplace, it turns out, is gone.¹⁰

But this brand-new world almost immediately begins to reveal its own hierarchical systems and modes of social differentiation. B-Mor is what is known as a “facility,” one of many former large urban centers that have been repurposed as techno-agrarian settlements. The primary industry of B-Mor is fish-farming and some vegetable production, exclusively for the consumption of a class of privileged professionals inhabiting the planned communities called the Charter Villages. The system is not capitalistic but neocolonial, for the Charter Villages get the best and exclusive selection of the fish produced, while B-Mor denizens have to buy back their own fish at a supposed discount. Moreover, we learn that these techno-agrarian facilities are settled and peopled almost exclusively by laborers of Asian extraction who are now both the settlers and the imported laborers. The historic reference is clear.

Far from an idyllic agrarian village, B-Mor turns out to be a citadel, one that is highly regulated, regimented, and surveilled. From the layers of fences to the ubiquitous cameras to the seemingly all-seeing anonymous narrator(s) speaking in the collective first person, “we,” the world of B-Mor is as claustrophobic as it is insistently and self-professedly comforting. Although there are mentions of families, parents, and children, somehow the denizens of B-Mor do not live within a traditional kinship system nor seem to participate in its affective ties. As the unreliable narrators observe complacently, Fan “did not long *particularly* for her parents or siblings” (50, my emphasis). And although there does not seem to be a traditional family structure such as parents living with children, those who live in B-Mor have very distinct obligations toward the community as a collective. It is chilling the way families and kinship systems are simultaneously so tight and so emaciated in this book.

The never-identified narrating “we” alternates between possibly village elders, to simply concerned fellow denizens, to the voice of the “Federation,” the invisible corporate Big Brother who imported the settlers in the first place. Sometimes they speak for and at times against Fan. In speaking blissfully about the security of their “schedules,” “shifts,” “free time available to us,” and neighbors “over the fence,” the “we” paints a picture reminiscent of the history of incarceration and concentration camps, including both the German Pogrom against Jews and American Japanese Internment camps. Moreover, we cannot forget that this haven of security in an apocalyptic landscape is also a labor-production community catering exclusively to the appetites of the Charter Villages.

Finally, and most insidiously, this world of new cosmopolitanism (where no one cares where anyone is from because they are all from somewhere else) is haunted by a categorical biological directive: not race per se, but genetics. Due to some unspecified environmental cataclysm, almost everyone in the world of the novel is afflicted with one or other form of “C-illness” (cancer, presumably, although the word is never used). Those in the Charters spend massive amounts of money on long-term C-treatment and radically circumscribed diets (like consuming only the freshest – that is, most regulated – foods or trends like eating “Japanese knotweed”) in order to extend their lifespans, whereas the laborers in the facilities just stoically accept that they are going to die at a comparatively young age.

The novel begins when Fan, a skilled diver in the village’s fish-farming plant, quietly leaves the compound without permission in order to find her boyfriend Reg, who had suddenly disappeared after having been called in to see the Manager. Reg, the invisible man and the Godot in the story, is unique in several ways. Due to some stroke of genetic fortune (or misfortune), Reg is unprecedentedly C-free. We suspect that Reg has been taken by the Charter Villages for medical and scientific experimentations; indeed, after his disappearance, the rest of his household was shuttled by special bus to a clinic for days of testing and retesting. And the racial logic behind Reg’s unnatural health slowly emerges: “tall” with sandy-hazel eyes and luminous skin the color of “smooth river stone . . . wheat-brown, buttery” (7) and “kinky” (9) hair, Reg turns out to be the descendant of a union between an original settler, “the Xi-Jang clan,” and one of the “holdout families, surname Willis” (76). In other words, Reg’s Afro-Asian roots, his racial “contamination” is somehow also why he is “so cellularly pure” (76). In this new world, notions of health and contamination, purity and pollution, privilege and discrimination weave in and out of one another in an intricate dance, encapsulated in the single and singular figure of Reg, a “perfect anomaly” (77). Reg’s racial difference-within-difference somehow produces a genetic purity that is also an abnormality, giving him a reprieve from the pathology that afflicts everyone else in this world, but this exoneration also marks him as target. He is the marked unmarked person, the stigmaless person who is therefore the stigma, the absence that drives the plot.

The racial logic that haunts and is generated by the invisible figure of Reg spreads equally silently and ineluctably throughout the novel, particularly in the ways that B-Mor is a foodway/source for this new world. We learn, for instance, that the best and the brightest children from villages like B-Mor are “selected” and “taken” by the Charter Villages. The people in B-Mor are like the fish they nurture and harvest; they, too, are being fed and harvested, on both an economic and a biological level. Thus, B-Mor does not only supply

the Charters with food – specifically, viable, farm-raised, uncontaminated fish, but also with human bodies. This is why the image of the fish tank, both literal and metaphoric, populates the narrative. All the characters are under surveillance as if they were living inside a fish bowl; B-Mor itself is laid out like with a series of concentric gates, that is to say, a series of concentric tanks; the crowded residents of B-Mor are often compared to fish; and, for those familiar with the novel, consider as well how characters like Mister Leo and Miss Cathy own houses with concentric cloisters; the ubiquitous presence of aquariums in the homes of Charter Villagers (at once different from the utilitarian fish farms of B-Mor by being decorative but also similar in a logic of consumption). The Charter Villages' primary directive, to extend life, is made possible at the price of the disposability of its satellite laboring communities. In this way, B-Mor *is* itself an aquarium. Near the end of the novel, when the narrators turn to their parent company and ask, "Take us up. We are ready to be chosen" (366), how can we not help but hear in this supplication, "We are ready to be eaten"?

In her study *Parlor Ponds: The Cultural Work of the American Home Aquarium, 1850–1970*, Judith Hamera examines the myriad cultural meanings of the American home aquarium during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and argues that the home aquarium provided its enthusiasts with a potent tool for managing the challenges of historical change, from urbanization to globalization. It is a miniaturized space and duplicate ecology of nourishment, surveillance, petdom, and experimentation. It foregrounds, Hamera reminds us, the intimacy between violence and care. (Is this why whenever food appears in this book, even when it is super fresh or organic, it always feels ominous?) In Lee's novel, be it the industrial aquarium that *is* B-Mor or the ornamental aquarium in a fancy Charter home, humans in harvesting animal lives for either sustenance or entertainment have placed themselves and on another *in the tank*. This also accounts for why images of drowning abound in this diegesis: from the little boy who got stuck and drowned in the village fish tank's drain pipe to Fan's own many suffocating encounters.

And who can forget one of the creepiest scenes in the novel when Fan, in encountering and working for a Charter woman named Miss Cathy, finds herself the new favored pet of the older woman and then discovers that she has been incorporated into the collection of girls whom Miss Cathy keeps like daughters/pets in a hidden cloistered room behind her bedroom? Asian American scholars have studied in a wide variety of contexts the perceived tense relationship between ideas of Asian Americanness and ideas of animal-as-food versus animal-as-pet. Sociologist Claire Jean Kim approach this tension via an interpretation of the impassioned disputes that have arisen

in the contemporary United States over the use of animals in the cultural practices of nonwhite peoples, in particular, the perceived “cruelty” of the live animal markets in San Francisco’s Chinatown; literary scholar Chi-Ming Yang has written persuasively of the Asiatic origins of the prized miniature “toy dog” in eighteenth-century England, exploring the parallel between the empirical resemblances between human and non-human animals posited by eighteenth-century classification systems of natural history and the economics and poetics of classifying miniature dog life; and, finally, most explicitly, James Kim reminds us that the logic of the pet is ultimately a colonial one: The figure of the Asian pet/the Asian-as-pet, Kim writes, plays a historic and significant role in making up the “geopolitical economy of racial feeling.”¹¹ So when Fan finds herself cherished, fawned over, collected, imprisoned, and basically entombed in Miss Cathy’s perpetual sleep party/parental harem, we are encountering in this distant future the full suffocating force of this geopolitical and affective economy at work since the nineteenth century.

And if the power structure of petdom is disturbing, then the breakdown of the security of petdom is even more so. The pet logic tells us there are animals that you pet/keep, and there are animals that you eat, and the two shall not be confused. But, in *On Such a Full Sea*, the non-comestible pet, the edible animal, and the consuming human as three critically distinct categories start to falter and contaminate one another. No one embodies this threatening collapse more poignantly than our protagonist. Our first sight of Fan shows her swimming with the ease of an otter in a fish tank in black neoprene:

For Fan, more than the other divers, took to the tanks with a quiet abandon . . . For divers have perished from time to time . . . But Fan would be there, simply swimming about . . . She once told us that she almost preferred being in the tanks than out in the air of B-Mor, that she liked the feeling of having to hold her breath and go against her nature, which made her more aware of herself as this mere, lone body . . . she would . . . drift to the bottom and stay there in that crouch until her lungs screamed for forgiveness . . . She was summoning a different kind of force that would transform not her but the composition of the realm. (6–7)

Well before being kept in Miss Cathy’s concentrically cloistered home, Fan was already part of a collection. Part mermaid and part simian, Fan was always a figure of tension, at once at home in and oppressed by that which surrounds her, a fish and a fish out of water: “only the pale gleam of her bare feet and hands and face to indicate her humanity . . . a creature of prey, a sleek dark seabird knifing into the water . . . ” (7) In fact, the interstitial figure of the mermaid has itself historically and fantastically invoked questions about the distinction between the human and the animal, which is to say, she has always been a racialized figure:¹²



Fig. 14.2 J. Godby, "A Mermaid Situated on a Rock" (1814).
Courtesy of the Wellcome Library.

And in the ecology of the B-Mor fish farm, Fan triples as mother, midwife, and sibling. Like a fish herself, Fan's job was to "husband and nurture the valuable fish," to sing "a motherly lullaby ... a dream-song of refuge, right up to the moment of harvest" (7). Fan nurtures that which is to be killed, sold, and eaten. She is pimp, product, feeder, and the fed. Foreshadowing, without our knowing it at the time, the little girls in Miss Cathy's closet, Fan's place in the fish tank

plays out the entwined logic of care and violence. And Fan is both the source and object of violence herself:

This cool Amazonian hue that suggests a fecundity primordial and unceasing . . . sometimes the fish seemed to gird her and bear her along the tank walls like a living scaffolding, or perhaps lead her to one of their dead by swarming about its upended corpse, or even playfully school themselves into just her shape and become her mirror in the water. At the pellet drop they are simply fish again and thrash upwards, mouth agape, the vibrato of the water chattering and electric, as if bees were madly attempting to pass through her suit. And wouldn't it be truth enough to speak of these bristling hundreds as not only being cared for by the diver but as serving to shepherd her, too, through the march of days? (8)

This piercing *and* lulling environment serves as a parable for the very idea of community in this novel: *to eat is to be eaten, a symbiosis of support and murder*. In this unforgiving text, community and collectivity always entail both a gift and a cut, sanctuary and prison. This is a world where the reassurance “you will never die alone” sounds deeply disturbing.

Given this world, given how this text critiques power while constantly acknowledging its seduction and comfort, what can *we* want from the collective identity of “Asian Americanness”? We cannot critique the narrating “we” in the novel without also implicating ourselves and our own political longings. I am not suggesting here some facile insight about literary reflexivity, where fiction makes us think about ourselves, but that Lee has very deliberately and I think rather mercilessly sutured us into the narrating voice, not because it is a “we,” but because the entire narration has been sewing us into a fantasy that both frightens and binds us. If the reader finds herself desperately wishing that the novel would not end on an entirely bleak note – to discover, for instance, that after surviving all her trials, Fan would end up being sold out and sold by her own brother whom she finally finds in a Charter Village – then the reader will be equally surprised by her lack of relief when Lee seems to give us that happy ending after all, when we find Fan saved and being driven into an unknown, wide open future.

Why not? Why are we not reassured by the end of the diegesis? Because we were never safe in this narration in the first place. All through the novel, the very idea of what is or is not happening has been in question even as we eagerly eat up Fan’s adventures and misadventures. Based on hearsay, conjectures, and a few reported surveillance shots, the tale of Fan has always been given to us *as a tale*. (Indeed, how could anyone in the diegesis know what did happen to Fan? It is either all made up or all surveilled and bone chilling in either case.) In a recursive moment, the narrators tell us, Fan is

a “cause that has been taken up by a startling number of us” (3), at once a figure of hope and a tale of caution. In following this figure, *we* have been enlisted into *fandom*: the celebration of an individuality to which we must sacrifice our own. More than the uncertainty of fictions, *this* fiction has been training us to question the very notion of (human, ecological, political, and readerly) sustainability. In fact, in a moment of rare forthrightness, our usually unreliable narrators muse: “we may in fact be of a design unsustainable” (115). Is this a comment about the Federation and the Charter Villages, or is it about privileged humanness itself?

We, too, thrive on fantasies of survival and freedom that are often predicated on the consumption of others. Even the discomfort of willfully suspending our disbelief in order to accept the happy ending is just that ever more slightly bearable than confronting the devastating possibility that Fan never had her adventures at all; that she simply disappeared like Reg or, worse, was an invention by the “communities” to lend human content to disappearances like Reg’s. In the end what is really terrifying is not that we are drowning in but are *bolstered by* the full sea of our endless appetite for a sustainable (material and affective) future. We want to keep on *eating*, and we want to keep on *feeling*, even if it is at the price of our loves being pure fiction.¹³

On Such a Full Sea thus offers an incisive critique of identity politics by radically undoing its functions and then rebuilding its drive in a new and weird way. Indeed, many aspects of the human world as we know it – community, nationhood, kinship, love, violence, nourishment, sociality, marginalization – get broken down in this novel and then reformed again as something at once strange yet cannily familiar. At once futuristic and historically haunting, the world of *On Such a Full Sea* is a world where “race” and “nationhood” does not matter anymore but in which biological and geographical segregation is the order of the day. B-more is a place of contradictions: this is a world where health and contagion mean the same thing; where impoverishment and conspicuous consumption go hand in hand; where family ties are unbreakable yet affectively emaciated; where imprisonment and freedom look the same; where intentionality and callousness converge; where individuality and collectivity compromise each other; where love and fetishism speak the same language. This is also a world that makes the postcolonial and the post-apocalyptic models – both critical models for thinking about power and destruction – not quite relevant anymore because we are talking about a different kind of future that may well be ours.

By turning to the crises of food and ecology as sites to trouble the facile division between the human and the animal, the consumer and the consumed, Lee forces us to reconsider as well our easy assumptions about

racial-ethnic identity and the corporeal integrity that presumably substantiates that identity. *On Such a Full Sea* is also a painful meditation about the price of love: how we take in – that is, consume and murder – that which we love. The difference of Asian Americanness may be at once appetizing for mainstream American culture and distasteful for mainstream American polity, but this self-same difference is also something that the Asian American subject must ingest and labor to digest, materially, socially, and psychically. We can now return to the larger canon of Asian American literature, revisit its expansive and enduring conceits of food and hunger, and ask: How does the eaten eat?

Notes

1. Kyla Tompkins, *Racial Indigestion: Eating Bodies in the 19th Century* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 2 and 8.
2. Tompkins, *Racial Indigestion*, 5. Emphasis in original.
3. Ronald Takaki points out that Asian Americans, even second or third generations, remain perceived by mainstream America as foreigners in his still foundational treatise, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans* (New York: Little, Brown, and Company, 1988), Revised and updated edition.
4. Wenyng Xu, *Eating Identities: Reading Food and Asian American Literature* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 2007).
5. Amy Bentley, “From Culinary Other to Mainstream American: Meanings and Uses of Southwestern Cuisine,” in *Culinary Tourism*, ed. Lucy M. Long (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 2004), 209–25.
6. Philip P. Choy, *Coming Man: Nineteenth Century Perceptions of the Chinese* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1995).
7. Anne Anlin Cheng, *The Melancholy of Race: Psychoanalysis, Assimilation, and Hidden Grief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).
8. Xu, *Eating Identities*, 2. While there is a host of sociological studies of “Asian foodways” in America to be found – for example, the development of sushi as an industry or the development of the Chinese restaurant as a business in America – little has been written about food and Asian American literature, much less theorized about it. This is a rich field of inquiry that I think Xu’s book inspired and awaits contributions.
9. Another example of an Asian American text that appears to eschew thematizing Asian Americanness yet nonetheless offers a profound mediation on that identity, precisely through an engagement with food and eating, is David Wong Louie’s evocative short story “Bottles of Beaujolais.” See Anne Anlin Cheng, “Sushi, Otters, and Mermaids: Race at the Intersection of Food and Animals; or, David Wong Louie’s Sushi Principle,” *Resilience: A Journal of the Environmental Humanities*, 2.1 (May 20, 2015), 66–95.
10. Chang-rae Lee, *On Such a Full Sea* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2014), 4.
11. Claire Jean Kim, *Dangerous Crossings: Race, Species, and Nature in a Multicultural Age* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Chi-ming

Yang, “Culture in Miniature: Toys Dogs and Object Life,” *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 25.1 (Fall 2012), 139–74; James Kim, “Petting Asian American,” *MELUS: Multi-Ethnic Literature of the U.S.*, 36.1 (Spring 2011), 136.

12. For more on the idea of the mermaid as an interracial figure, see Cheng, “Sushi, Otters, Mermaids.”
13. In a sense, this is *the* difficult truth behind much of dystopic fiction: that the privilege of and nostalgia for the human always seems to come down, not to an attachment to material life, but to the capacity to feel, even when those feelings are shown to be imagined or, worse, engineered. This is an insight that is, for example, suggested by Ridley Scott’s 1982 classic dystopic fiction *Blade Runner*, an insight that is retrieved and magnified in its 2017 sequel *Blade Runner 2049*.

JONATHAN BISHOP HIGHFIELD

Postcolonial Foodways in Contemporary African Literature

Food, drink and land being key elements of survival, many of the cases taken on by Mandela and Tambo had a gastronomic or agricultural aspect. From the peasant farmers in Sekhukhuneland who were being removed from their land by apartheid legislation and the women in Cato Manor who were arrested for brewing and selling beer, to prison labourers exploited on potato farms and other people who had committed “crimes” such as using a water fountain designated as “whites only” – wherever there were apartheid-engendered attacks on the livelihood and dignity of the oppressed, there were Mandela and Tambo. – Anna Trapido, *Hunger for Freedom*.¹

Reading contemporary African fiction through the lens of food and foodways reveals different ways that writers deploy agriculture, cooking, and eating to highlight the traumas of history, the emptiness of displacement, and the power of community. As the epigraph suggests, food was a means of control in colonial Africa, and its accessibility remains central in the period after colonization. Food is material culture, and the matrices of power and desire it is a part of can open a novel to a more nuanced reading. In the 2004 article “Follow the Thing: Papaya,” Ian Cook examines the network that brings papayas to a supermarket in London, moving from the buyer for the supermarket chain, all the way to the person who picked the papayas in the field.² Cook essentially “reads” the papaya, looking at its different meaning in different cultural and socioeconomic spaces. The same object, the papaya, is imbued with different meanings for the farm owner and the distributor, for the laborer and the consumer.

The fact that the material object that Cook chooses to follow is a foodstuff should come as no surprise. In her introduction to *The Senses Still*, C. Nadia Seremetakis emphasizes how the taste of a peach, or even the memory of a taste of a peach “reveals the extent to which the senses are entangled with history, memory, forgetfulness, narrative and silence.”³ In formerly colonized spaces, food and foodways are nearly always contested sites of anticolonialism and

neocolonialism. The intersection between postcolonial studies and food studies has intensified in the past decade, with several books illustrating the ways food and foodways illuminate the histories, cultures, and socioeconomics of formerly colonized spaces. In *Alimentary Tracts* Parama Roy examines the way “appetites, hungers, compulsions, excesses, intoxications, aversions, and addictions help to institute, enact, or unsettle one’s sense of identities and histories in the colonial period and the postcolonial aftermath.”⁴ Roy focuses each chapter of her book on a different historical period on the Indian subcontinent and traces the ways identity and history are impacted by food and foodways, their presence, absence, or insinuation. The texts she considers are not only novels; she looks at historical documents, memoirs, and cookbooks in order to truly flesh out the relationship of production and consumption of food with the narrative of Indian history.

Food, Foodways and Foodscapes, edited by Lily Kong and Vineeta Sinha, explores the history and variety of foods in Singapore, and how their preparation, consumption, and promotion has become central to Singapore’s identity.⁵ An important aspect the essays address is how social context impacts foodways, a particularly rich topic in a city-state reliant on imported foodstuffs. Like Roy, the contributors to *Food, Foodways and Foodscapes* read more than novels; they examine hawker centers, cookbooks, *koptiam* (coffee shops), and blogs as they explore Singapore’s relationship with food from its colonial past to its global present.

Njeri Githire’s *Cannibal Writes* explores the trope of cannibalism in colonial stories told of the Caribbean and the Indian Ocean.⁶ Her readings of novels reveals how plantation colonies became edible themselves, markets of (enslaved) production transformed into sites of consumption. In *Culinary Fictions* Anita Mannur looks at how food is central to the cultural imagination of Indians in the diaspora, articulating “a vision of South Asian Americaness that is attentive to the crisscrossing networks that connect Sri Lankan-British, Indo-Caribbean, Pakistani-American iterations of subjectivity.”⁷ Gabeba Baderoon’s *Regarding Muslims* looks at how the history of slavery is encoded in the Muslim cooking of the South African Cape, writing that “Enslaved people created a new language of food out of dominant traditions that eventually also influenced the tastes of slave-owners. One can trace the porous boundaries of the slave kitchen in contemporary South African Food practices, with food thus constituting a powerful archive.”⁸

Maize and Grace by James C. McCann looks at the arrival of maize in West Africa through the Columbian Exchange, then traces its growing importance across the continent as a foodstuff, and looks at the farmers

and cultivation programs that have created unique varieties suited for African diets and African climates.⁹ McCann's more recent book, *Stirring the Pot*, explores the spices and ingredients common on the continent, focusing on the history of three distinct cuisines – the foods of Ethiopia, the foods of West Africa, and the foods of diasporic Africans.¹⁰

As the geographer Michael Watts points out "Most food in Africa was, and indeed still is, produced by smallholders and, particularly, female farmers, and hence the burden of cheap food policies fell squarely on the shoulders of women and the rural poor."¹¹ Given that, looking at the role of women in the fields and markets is crucial to understanding foodways on the continent. Leigh Brownhill's work on women in Kenya in *Land, Food, Freedom* offers insight into the women's protection of common land in Kenya, from the Mau Mau movement to the Green Belt Movement of Nobel Peace laureate Wangari Maathai.¹² Gracia Clark's *Onions Are My Husband* and *African Market Women* illustrate the centrality of women in the markets of Ghana, and allow those women's histories, concerns, and desires to be narrated in their own words.¹³

My book, *Food and Foodways in African Narratives*, looks at the role of food, its production, preparation, and consumption in African narratives, beginning with folktales and oral epics, moving through memoirs of white settler women, continuing with novels from the 1970s to the 1990s, and ending with two contemporary cookbooks, one by a Senegalese chef working in New York and one by a displaced Ethiopian, raised in Sweden.¹⁴ What I try to ask is what is food doing in the narrative? How does paying attention to it reveal something that Elizabeth A. Eldredge calls "a hidden transcript"?¹⁵ I think that foodways in narratives can reveal what Eldredge terms "the colonization of consciousness, of culture, and of daily life,"¹⁶ but I do not think they are as much hidden as overlooked. The descriptions of preparing a meal, working in a garden, or butchering a chicken, seem so commonplace that the meaning instilled in those passages can go by without notice. What do those domestic moments reveal about the dynamics of gender, of power, and of class in narratives?

Those are the same questions this essay is asking of three contemporary African novels – NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names*, Rozena Maart's *Rosa's District 6*, and Aminatta Forna's *Ancestor Stones*.¹⁷ How does growing, cooking, and eating food enrich each novel, and do the novels offer a shared vision of the power of food across the continent? It is important to note the location shifts in each novel: *Ancestor Stones* begins in London, then shifts to Sierra Leone, and then returns to London; *We Need New Names*

follows the protagonist as she immigrates from Zimbabwe to the United States; and Rosa's *District 6* takes place in a space accessible only through memory. This liminality infuses the foods with special power in the imagination, as their aromas and tastes signify home.

Food and Anxiety: NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names*

NoViolet Bulawayo's novel *We Need New Names* begins in unnamed location in Zimbabwe, with six children leaving their home neighborhood of Paradise for the more affluent neighborhood of Budapest. Hunger is driving their actions: "We didn't eat this morning and my stomach feels like somebody just took a shovel and dug everything out."¹⁸ The poverty that the narrator, Darling, is living in begins with the destruction of her community as part of Operation Murambatsvina in 2005. The UN Special Envoy sent in to report on conditions after the urban clearances opens her report with this description:

On 19 May 2005, with little or no warning, the Government of Zimbabwe embarked on an operation to "clean-up" its cities. It was a "crash" operation known as "Operation Murambatsvina", referred to in this report as Operation Restore Order . . . The vast majority of those directly and indirectly affected are the poor and disadvantaged segments of the population. They are, today, deeper in poverty, deprivation and destitution, and have been rendered more vulnerable.¹⁹

Darling does not like to fall asleep because she dreams of the day the bulldozers tore down their home and crushed their belongings, and in Paradise, the shantytown where they have resettled, she and the other children roam the streets, looking for food. By the novel's end Darling will be in Michigan, eating fast food and marveling at obesity. Bulawayo contrasts the activities of the children in Zimbabwe with the activities of the teenagers in Michigan. The child Darling crosses the highway into a nicer neighborhood to steal guavas with the other children from Paradise; the teenage Darling goes to the mall and looks at a \$3,000 watch with her crew.²⁰ The novel revels in the contrasts: in Zimbabwe the children act out the beating death of an antigovernment activist while in Michigan, Darling and her friends play dress up in the dressing rooms at JC Penney.

The gap between privilege and poverty is characterized by an early scene in the novel, during the children's guava stealing expedition in Budapest. A young woman calls to them from one of the houses from whose yard they have been stealing guavas. She is from London, visiting her father's home country for the first time. She has purple toenails, a gold chain with a map of Africa on it, and

a pink camera that she takes pictures of the children with. She also is eating something Darling has never seen before:

I look closely at her long hand, at the thing she is eating. It's flat, and the outer part is crusty. The top is creamish and looks fluffy and soft, and there are coin-like things on it, a deep pink, the color of burn wounds. I also see sprinkles of red and green and yellow, and finally the brown bumps that look like pimples.²¹

The piece of pizza is so unrecognizable to Darling that she calls it “a thing”; it does not even remotely resemble what she would think of as food. When the woman casually chuck's it away, laughing as she misses the bin, the children are horrified: “We have never ever seen anyone throw food away, even if it's a thing.”²² The children allow her to take some photographs of them, then walk away, stopping and turning back after crossing the street to yell insults at her: “We shout and we shout and we shout; we want to eat the thing she was eating, we want to hear our voices soar, we want our hunger to go away.”²³

As Frantz Fanon writes in *The Wretched of the Earth*, for people in the “context of oppression, living does not mean embodying moral values or taking his (sic) place in the coherent and fruitful development of the world. To live means to keep on existing. Every date is a victory: not as the result of work, but a victory felt as a triumph for life.”²⁴ The children see the throwing away of the pizza crust not as insulting, not as a transgression, but, as Fanon writes, as an attempt at murder.²⁵ Just as Operation Murambatsvina has robbed their parents of their livelihoods, has stolen their education, has condemned thousands to deaths from HIV/AIDS, the casual discarding of food is an act of dispossession, stripping their dignity away, as they struggle to restrain themselves from picking the discarded pizza off the ground.

Food is associated with death throughout *We Need New Names*. When they find a dead woman “dangling in a tree like a strange fruit,”²⁶ it becomes an opportunity for food, as they steal the dead woman's new red shoes to sell so they can buy a loaf of bread:

We all turn round and follow Bastard back into the bush, the dizzying smell of Lobels bread all around us now, and then we are rushing, then we are running, then we are running and laughing and laughing and laughing.²⁷

The exchange there – a new pair of shoes for “a loaf, or maybe even one and a half”²⁸ – hints at the terrible inflation in food prices that struck Zimbabwe in the early 2000s: “Food inflation in Zimbabwe averaged 2306221.46 percent from 2003 until 2017, reaching an all time high of 353131459.30 percent in July of 2008.”²⁹ Given those economic conditions, it is unsurprising that food or the lack of it would be so closely associated with death.

In the United States food is also associated with death through the descriptions of the eating disorders Darling sees all around her. Darling describes her cousin's eating pattern and contrasts to her experience in Zimbabwe:

When the microwave says *nting*, fat boy TK takes out a pizza and eats it. When the microwave says *nting* again, he takes out the chicken wings. And then it's the burritos and hot dogs. Eat eat eat. All the food TK eats in one day, me and Mother and Mother of Bones would eat in maybe two or three days back home.³⁰

These eating patterns lead to obesity and all of its accompanying health risks: heart disease, sleep disorders, blood clots, leg ulcers, pancreatic inflammation, and type 2 diabetes.³¹ As Darling points out, "In America, the fatness is not the fatness I was used to at home."³² In describing obesity, Darling says, "the body is turned into something else."³³ In Zimbabwe, the poor suffered from lack of food, in Michigan, people in economic distress often they only have access to the kind of processed food Darling describes TK as eating and are more likely to battle obesity and its health effects. In *The End of Food*, Paul Roberts describes the Zip Code Effect, which turns poor neighborhoods into food deserts:

One study of all food stores in three low-income Zip Codes in Detroit found that fewer than one in five carried a minimal healthy-food basket – that is, food products representing all strata of the food pyramid. The study also found that perishable items weren't as fresh as they were in richer neighborhoods, and that, in the cruellest twist, basic staples like bread and milk were actually more expensive in poor Zip Codes than in wealthy ones.³⁴

As Darling says, in America "We ate like pigs, like wolves, like dignitaries; we ate like vultures, like stray dogs, like monsters; we ate like kings."³⁵ Just as "the body is turned into something else"³⁶ in America, the soul is also transformed by the presence of such plenty. Eating in America is gluttonous – the vulture and the stray dog gorging on whatever corpse they can find; the king and the dignitary stealing food from someone else's labor. Despite not having to steal guavas for food, in the United States food is still associated with anxiety and potential death, and, most importantly, loss of self.

The novel's end also hints at the constellation of food, dispossession, and death. In Kalamazoo, Darling's uncle comes home with the news that Osama bin Laden has been killed, and that prompts a memory in Darling of the game of find bin Laden she and her friends in Paradise played. They see a dog and as they run toward it "shouting Bin Laden! Bin Laden!" a lorry carrying Lobels bread runs the dog over. Darling's description of the aftermath ends the novel:

Crushed meat. Long pink tongue licking the earth. A lone paw raised in a perfect high-five. Bones jutting out of the side of the stomach. One eye popped out (I could not see the other). And the delicious, delicious smell of Lobels bread.³⁷

The smell of food is just a tease that covers over brutality and violence. Paradise is Fanon's farmyard, where people scrap over crusts of bread like hens, and the loss of food can lead to murder. Bulawayo's work explores the desensitization privation can bring about, and also, in America, the desensitization commercial culture can also cause. Food works as a vehicle to showcase that desensitization.

Food and Community: Rozena Maart's *Rosa's District 6*

In *Rosa's District 6*, a collection of five interlaced stories, food serves as a major marker of communal identity. The book takes place in District Six in Cape Town in the late 1960s–early 1970s. District Six “was established as a mixed community of freed slaves, merchants, artisans, labourers and immigrants” in 1867, but “On 11 February 1966 it was declared a white area under the Group Areas Act of 1950, and by 1982, the life of the community was over. More than 60 000 people were forcibly removed to barren outlying areas aptly known as the Cape Flats, and their houses in District Six were flattened by bulldozers.”³⁸ The stories in *Rosa's District 6* take place in the community that existed prior to those forced removals.

Writing about District Six and her novel, Rozena Maart emphasizes the joy and defiance in the making and eating of food in District Six:

The description evokes the image of poverty as a party. This is their life – they will make it as joyful as they are. The stove, fire, the use of wood that bring flavor to the page, the smell of the coffee brewing on it, the Javanese blood and brewing in homes where Dutch slavery could not erase taste nor destroy the desire to enjoy the culinary delights that colonizers, whose palates only knew raw meat and whose colonial objective included a determination to enhance the flavor of its food through coloniality, could never understand. Rosa's District Six has flavor.³⁹

In “No Rosa, No District Six,” the opening story, the early morning community Rosa belongs to is described in a nineteen-line sentence as she searches for somewhere to hide while she skips school for the day. The sentence meanders through early District Six just like Rosa does, experiencing the sights, smells, and sounds of the city waking up. Food and its aroma are one of the key sensory elements in this scene. As Shaun Viljoen writes in *District Six Huis Kombuis*, “Food memories, which are always about much

more than food, enable displaced District Sixers to recuperate a past stolen from them,”⁴⁰ and *Rosa's District 6* charts the confluence of ethnicity and class through the aroma of turmeric and onions, as supper must be started in the morning because the women who are cooking it will be working until late afternoon. Auntie Tiefa sets up her food cart across from the Ospavat factory to sell the workers “some tomatoes or maybe some homemade mango pickle,”⁴¹ taking advantage of the presence of cash in the factory worker’s pockets to supplement the family income.

Viljoen notes that diversity and interculturality were at the heart of District Six: “the language of the spirit, the book reminds us, was as much a mengelmoes as the people, the place and the food – a mix of English, Afrikaans, Malay, Arabic, isiXhosa, Kaaps, Sanskrit and words and idiom sommer opgemaak (just made up), spoken and rarely written.”⁴² This diversity can be seen both in the languages and in the foods in *Rosa's District 6*. Along with Auntie Tiefa’s vegetable and pickle cart, other street food fills the pages of *Rosa's District 6*, which also speaks to the diversity of the district: “rotisserie barbecued chicken,”⁴³ “samoosas, daltjies, slangetjies,”⁴⁴ “Redro fish paste on der Deuns bread,”⁴⁵ chai made with rooibos tea,⁴⁶ Constantia grapes,⁴⁷ “snoek,”⁴⁸ and “a red toffee apple”⁴⁹ all speak to a local food culture that emerges from a cross-pollination of foodways and local ingredients.

There is a communality in the foodways of District Six. Much of the action in *Rosa's District 6* occurs out in the street, a shared space with shared experiences. In *District Six Huis Kombuis*, Viljoen emphasizes that the shared experiences that so shape the outward appearance of District Six also transfer into the domestic space:

Outside the homes of the District before its destruction, the street was a communal space for engaging, sharing, playing, skinning (or talking idly), hanging around and walking, as were the shops, markets, churches, mosques, synagogues and bioscopes. Inside the homes, it was the table, particularly the kitchen table, that was at the centre of domestic family life, of the rituals of making and eating food. The tradition of the tafel, the open invitation to share in a feast, marked special social occasions.⁵⁰

This sharing of food resonates throughout Maart’s stories, with the host’s enjoying the appetites of their guests. Maart explicitly emphasizes that this sharing crosses ethnic and religious boundaries, writing of pickled fish that both Christians and Muslims share on Good Friday:

On Good Friday, the smell of onions sautéing in oil and turmeric took over the streets; palm-sized pieces of fish would be fried and placed in the turmeric sauce which contained not only tamarind and brown sugar but also vinegar as the

extra, necessary ingredient to preserve the fish. The smell of freshly baked white bread, made by women, mostly, would waft in and out of the homes as women got their knives ready, sharpened them against the paved stones in their backyards and would cut bread to accompany the fish. The smell of onions, fish and baked bread enveloped District Six.⁵¹

Even many Christian families “kept halal homes because they had extended family that were Muslim, and eating was such an important part of District Six life, everyone wanted their friends and families to be able to eat at their homes.”⁵² In *District Six Huis Kombuis*, Moegamat Benjamin recalls the communal nature of the tafel experience:

Everybody used to help. Die een vrou bak die brood, eene maakie kos; die een hawker gie die vrugte an die anne een gie die groente. (One woman bakes the bread, one makes the food; the one hawker provides the fruit and the other one the vegetables.) That was how it used to be in District Six. Everybody helped one another.⁵³

It is this communalism across ethnic lines that made District Six so dangerous in the eyes of the apartheid authorities. People sharing food and foodways without regard to “race classification” suggested that the apartheid racial categories were nonsensical. Apartheid rules absolutely applied to food: even in prisons inmates were given different diets depending on their “race classification.”⁵⁴ The tafel was an absolute rejection of the concept of using food to divide; instead it brought people together.

In “The Bracelet,” the concluding story in the collection, race, identity, and sexuality are all intertwined, as Nathaniel Chambers, a light-skinned married man with a male lover from District Six, discovers his own parents are from District Six, but married and changed their names in an attempt to pass as white. He also discovers that his father also had a male lover. Food becomes a sensual element in this story as a man long separated from the food of his youth shares it with his son’s lover:

Mr Collingwood’s teeth sunk into the flaked crayfish, snoek, and prawns, all brought together by mashed bread, egg, and select roasted spices. Frikadel were fried and then eaten with a tomato sambal and spices, which merged their individual sensations into one glorious moment, all revealed in that first bite which drew out the different flavors of the seafood. Auntie Flowers slowly and carefully handed Mr Collingwood the sambal and he scooped it all on his frikadel then ate it like a ravenous animal. His appetite was insatiable.⁵⁵

That insatiability is not only for the frikadel, it is for the lost culture, the lost community, the lost sensuality of the District Six of his youth. As Maart

writes elsewhere in a piece about the older Rosa, the community Rosa lives in, and the sharing of food will soon be shattered by the forced relocations:

I don't know where Gadija moved to or Mari. I know they'll be looking at the mountain every day, just like me. I look across the court, the block from where we live. There are clothes stuffed in broken window-panes, pregnant, bulging, bursting with unspoken words fisted into glass panes. We eat our fish frikkadels and our savoury rice with tomato smoortjie in silence.⁵⁶

The silence as Rosa eats her frikkadel contrasts with Mr Collingwood's moaning pleasure as "his tongue caressed every morsel which sunk itself into his mouth."⁵⁷ The sensuality and companionship of the dinner in District Six are entirely absent in silent Lavendar Hill. The frikkadel no longer has the same meaning divorced from the community.

Food and Renewal: Aminatta Forna's *Ancestor Stones*

Aminatta Forna's *Ancestor Stones* is an exploration of the history of Sierra Leone, recounted exclusively through women's voices, and using the metaphor of a garden or farm as the central motif. The novel opens with Abie Kholifa, receiving a letter in her London home from her cousin Alpha that says, "The coffee plantation at Rofathane is yours. It is there."⁵⁸

In Abie's memories the coffee plantation at Rofathane is associated with her four "husbandless aunts"⁵⁹: Asana, Mariama, Hawa, and Serah, and the stories they told her. Back at Rofathane, thinking of reconstructing the coffee farm, she explicitly connects gardening with storytelling: "And it is women's work, this guarding of stories, like the tending of gardens."⁶⁰

Male characters are very much at the periphery of this novel, as unfaithful husbands, wayward sons, and distant fathers. Abie's own father, the brother to the aunts whose narratives make up the bulk of the novel, appears only twice, as a small child and as the assistant of his older sister as she serves as election precinct supervisor in the 1996 presidential elections. The gap between men and women is spelled out in a story Abie recounts upon receiving the letter from Sierra Leone. In the story, Portuguese sailors suffering from scurvy come to land on the West African coast, where they discover fruits in abundance. "The sailors thought they had found no less a place than the Garden of Eden."⁶¹ In reality, though, the fruits are part of a garden planted by women:

The sailors saw what they took to be nature's abundance and stole from the women's gardens. They thought they had found Eden, and perhaps they had. But it was an Eden created not by the hand of God, but the hands of women.⁶²

The theme of men taking what women nurture and treasure reverberates throughout the novel. The ancestor stones of the title are taken from Sakie and hurled into the river by her husband because he sees them as idolatrous. Years later, Sakie's daughter, Miriam, finds them and gives them to Abie. The novel closes with Abie's daughter, back in London, holding the stones: "Listen to the sound they make," she replied. 'It sounds like they're talking.'"⁶³ The ending, coming after the restoration of the coffee farm, suggests that renewal of country, family, and culture is possible in spite of dispossession and distance.

The novel opens and closes with sections in Abie's voice, as she returns to Sierra Leone and takes up the challenge of restoring the coffee plantation. The sixteen chapters in between are stories her four aunts tell her, of their lives and the history of the coffee farm:

For here the past survives in the scent of a coffee bean, a person's history is captured in the shape of an ear, and those most precious memories are hidden in the safest place of all. Safe from fire or floods or war. In stories. Stories remembered, until they are ready to be told. Or perhaps simply ready to be heard.⁶⁴

The stories are told to Abie as she assesses the farm and decides whether to restore it. They chart each woman's battles with patriarchy and authoritarianism as Sierra Leone descends into the chaos of civil war.

Like the "lost groves"⁶⁵ of coffee Abie returns to, much of the food in *Ancestor Stones* is characterized by its absence. In a displacement camp, a delivery of long-awaited food turns out to be lipsticks instead.⁶⁶ When a ferry sinks and most of the passengers drown, meals at the mission school change: "And for three Fridays in a row there was no fish for lunch. Just boiled yams and roasted plantains."⁶⁷ Farmers become gold miners and rice becomes scarce in the market.⁶⁸ Even when food is plentiful, it is its waste that is remarked upon:

At one time we received a consignment of cutlery from a church group in America. The first day I tried to make the grains of rice stay on my fork, to cut the meat from the oxtail and winkle out the marrow. Everyone was struggling. How hungry we were when we left the dining room. So much food gone to waste on the floor.⁶⁹

Plenty can be deceptive as well. When Mariama and her friend Marie turn in the cook at the school they are attending for stealing food, the cook is reprimanded, but has her revenge:

When Marie held out her plate Ma Cook gave her an extra-large helping. I was surprised at that. Marie laughed with satisfaction. Only when we sat down and began to eat did we discover the meat had a rotten taste.⁷⁰

The girls' hunger is exacerbated by receiving a plate of food they cannot eat. The grotesquerie of the absent food in Forna's novel increases as the novel proceeds. In the final chapter, before returning to Abie's narration, Aunt Miriamma recounts the advent of the civil war, and the way the humans were transformed into food themselves:

In the city the animals grew fat while the humans starved. The dogs were sleek and fit, their coats glossy. Vultures gorged until they could barely take to the air. The abundance of food gave the dogs a new confidence, the only ones with the freedom of the city. Under the bridge the fish nibbled at the jetsam of human corpses jamming the bay where every night suspected insurgents were shot by the dozen, their bodies tossed over the railings.⁷¹

That is the transition across the stories Abie's aunts tell her, from the beautiful farm, "an oasis in the forest"⁷² with "an order in which everybody had their place"⁷³ to a chaotic killing ground. The stories the aunts tell Abie as she restores the coffee farm are part of the renewal, of both the land and the spirit:

In the meantime a certain giddiness had come over my aunts as if the time spent remembering the girls and women they once had been had invigorated the spirits. They'd lifted the past from their own shoulders and handed it to me. I didn't see it as a burden, not at all. Rather a treasure trove of memories, of lives lived and lessons learned, of terrors faced and pleasures tasted.⁷⁴

Abie and the family create a new plantation with seedlings from the original one her grandfather had planted. But unlike the original, this farm will be mixed use, with cassava and fruits and vegetables supplementing the coffee.

That was three years ago, and every year since I have returned to Rofathane, taking with me my husband, my daughter, and my son. The seedlings have taken root and now the young coffee trees stand taller than my children. And we have planted more: limes, almonds and cashew nuts, chilies and ginger, too. The first crop left the village, loaded in a truck in wooden boxes with the words "Kholifa Estates" stamped on the side.⁷⁵

The novel ends with a productive farm again, the family restored and renewed by both the labor and the storytelling. Of the three novels discussed in this essay, Forna's ends with hope.

Food and the Body

Food is an important marker of materiality, and that is one reason that writers can use it as a shortcut to point to abundance or dispossession, community or isolation. Though the writers of the three novels discussed

use food and foodways differently, each connects food to the body. Because food is one of the necessities of life, through it writers can indicate a character's relationship to the environment, to the economy and to surrounding social conditions. Food speaks to community, food speaks to sensuality, food is pleasure. For Bulawayo, too much or too little food both carry the threat of death. For Maart, the sharing of food becomes a sensual communal experience. In Forna's novel, the absence of food becomes a memory engraved on the body. In all three novels, food is used to chart political and social history unique to each region. Foodways and food security can serve as important markers in ascertaining how liberation is proceeding because access to food is a basic human necessity and foodways serve as cultural and social markers that speak to a community's comfort with their access to food. In each novel political oppression impacts the community's ability to share food in a pleasurable manner, to come together in celebration. Using food as a marker, each novelist focuses the readers' attentions on the continued struggle for liberation in Sierra Leone, South Africa, and Zimbabwe. Following Frantz Fanon's emphasis on the "Africa of everyday,"⁷⁶ real liberation will come only when people control their own means of sustenance, and eating is a joy.

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19. Anna Kajumulo Tibaijuka, “Report of the Fact-Finding Mission to Zimbabwe to assess the Scope and Impact of Operation Murambatsvina by the UN Special Envoy on Human Settlements Issues in Zimbabwe.” July 18, 2005. www.un.org/News/dh/infocus/zimbabwe/zimbabwe_rpt.pdf. 7.
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21. Bulawayo, *We Need New Names*, 8.
22. Bulawayo, *We Need New Names*, 9.
23. Bulawayo, *We Need New Names*, 12.
24. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1968), 308.
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26. Bulawayo, *We Need New Names*, 18. This is one of the few times in the novel where Bulawayo's voice eclipses Darling's, because Darling would almost definitely not know the Abel Meeropol song made famous by Billie Holiday.
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63. Forna, *Ancestor Stones*, 317.
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EMILY CONTOIS

Blogging Food, Performing Gender

In an uncrowded blogosphere in August 2002, Julie Powell started a food blog, the *Julie/Julia Project*. Chronicling a self-imposed culinary challenge – to cook the 524 recipes in Julia Child’s *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* – Powell’s online musings blossomed into a blogging fairytale come to life, leading to a book deal and a major motion picture. Although not a typical food blog, the *Julie/Julia Project* provides a starting point for considering the history, composition, and meaning of blogs, particularly ones about food. The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* dates the term “blog,” a relatively recent media form, to 1999. That same year, chef and cookbook author David Lebovitz began one of the first successful food blogs. Since then, blogs have increased in popularity, saturating online spaces with hundreds of millions of self-produced, regularly updated webpages. In each month of 2016, more than 409 million people viewed approximately 23.6 billion pages on WordPress, a popular blogging platform launched in 2003.¹ Though a smaller subset, food blogs likely number in the millions as well.²

Blogs mirror cookbooks in their basic composition and in the ways that scholars have interpreted them as literary texts.³ While personal narrative primarily comprised the *Julie/Julia Project*, many of today’s most popular food blogs feature a combination of autobiographical (and at times confessional) writing along with original or modified recipes and stylized food photography, often graphic and sensuous close-up shots popularly called “food porn.”⁴ Blogs also differ from cookbooks as potent examples of “convergence culture,” which Henry Jenkins defined as “where old and new media collide, where grassroots and corporate media intersect, where the power of the media producer and the power of the media consumer interact in unpredictable ways.”⁵ Compared to the more static nature of printed cookbooks, blogs afford direct and immediate communication avenues – shares, likes, comments, links, and blog rolls – between authors

(bloggers) and readers, who may also be bloggers themselves, as they exchange recipes, tips, stories, and advice. Furthermore, unlike in the broadcast era when mass media was “standardized, uniform, and finished,” new media (like blogs) can be customized, personalized, and purposefully left unfinished, as bloggers and readers constantly co-produce and revise online content at a rapid pace.⁶ Within the fluidity of convergence, blogs facilitate dynamic exchanges of information, sociality, rights, and capital, often between new media and traditional mass media. As low-cost and relatively accessible publication platforms, blogs provide a broad swath of authors the technological means to communicate on a mass scale.

Blogs also serve a number of other functions for their authors, such as to find and create community, make sense of the past and future, foster an outlet for self-expression, and to exert or develop authority.⁷ Blogging also exemplifies sociologist Robert A. Stebbins’ “serious leisure perspective,” as some bloggers invest so much time and energy in their blogs that they systematically transform impassioned leisure activities into pseudo and even full-time careers.⁸ Though revenue-generating opportunities – like sponsored posts, advertising, cookbook and food memoir publishing, or opportunities to cook on food television – are not normative, their aspirational potential shapes the context of food blogging.

Just as food itself – and its related practices like food shopping, cooking, eating, feeding, and dieting – help to construct gender identities, so do blogs and blogging.⁹ Blogging as a social activity and blogs as cultural texts “perform” and “do” gender in everyday life.¹⁰ Blogging as gender performance also plays out in demographic, cultural, and political ways. While Sysomos’ 2010 study found a nearly even gender distribution among bloggers (50.9 percent female, 49.1 percent male), women author as much as 85 to 93 percent of food blogs.¹¹ The typical food blogger is a married woman in her 30s or 40s living in the United States, who is often a parent and likely employed outside the home.¹² Women with similar characteristics also dominate food blog readership and the social media channels through which blog content is often shared.¹³ As a result, the food blogosphere is often perceived as a feminized digital arena, which yields both oppressive and empowering results. Even when an agentive activity, food blogging garners a less respected position within the world of media content production. Furthermore, food blogs tend to reinforce conventional gender roles and categories.¹⁴ At the same time, female food bloggers harness the more accessible power of new media self-publishing to amplify their voices and those of their audience, to gain entry into traditional media forms, and, in some instances, to generate significant income.

Much of the scholarship analyzing food blogs and gender, however, has focused nearly exclusively on how blogs construct femininities and represent

women. A number of studies address how food blogs construct ideals of “domestic goddesses,” in which female food bloggers perform cooking and other domestic activities as hyper-feminine consumption within a postfeminist context.¹⁵ While less research has been published to date on the topic, food blogs also construct masculinities and work to validate specific representations of men through food, appetites, and cooking practices.¹⁶ Men’s food blogs build upon a longer history of men’s cookbooks and cookery advice, which portrayed male home cooks as natural gourmands, adventurers cooking over fire (or the backyard grill), and pancake-preparing fathers.¹⁷ The gendered demographics and cultural coding of food blogging shape how men perceive and experience the food blogosphere. For example, in a post titled, “Confessions, Observations, and Challenges from a Male Food Blogger,” Kevin (no last name) writes, “In a female dominated environment where single, married, both working and stay at home mommy bloggers rule, I’ve felt like an outsider and a minority. I am a male food blogger. There I said it and the small number I have found have been few and far between although I follow them closely.”¹⁸ Such sentiments reinforce the cultural coding of food, cooking, and feeding others as “feminine.”¹⁹ Moreover, as Kevin’s remarks demonstrate, men navigate and recast culturally constructed gender norms when they blog about food, but in ways that continue to subjugate femininities and women.

As such, this chapter does *not* claim that men and masculinities are marginalized within the blogging community, as a minority group of authors, readers, and unspoken content. Rather, this chapter examines how US bloggers, both male and female, navigate gendered dynamics of power on food blogs, particularly when they blog about a specific and highly gendered food genre: dude food. Unlike the feminine coding of home cooking, dude food blatantly communicates conventional notions of masculinity through culinary elements such as flavor, ingredients, cooking techniques, portion size, plating, and nutritional composition. Beyond the culinary, dude food blogs function as literary texts that communicate complicated notions of gender. The internal contradictions of dude food as a genre raise questions about how health, expertise, aesthetics, and social privilege are part of the impossibility of conventional gender performance. This chapter examines the different ways that four bloggers communicate the culinary characteristics and paradoxical concerns of dude food through a variable set of authorial personae and narrative styles fashioned through prose, recipes, and food photography.

Defining Dude Food

As an address term, a discourse marker, and an identity category, “dude” communicates a cool, unserious nonchalance. Sociolinguist Scott Kiesling

situates dude within “the cultural Discourses of young masculinity, which simultaneously demand masculine solidarity, strict heterosexuality, and nonconformity.”²⁰ What, then, is *dude food*? While food writers, journalists, and bloggers have written on dude food as a twenty-first-century culinary and social phenomenon, few scholars have, yet.²¹ A Google images search for dude food returns thousands of photos of burgers, pizza, and hot dogs. Although meat – a food perceived as masculine in cultures around the world – figures heavily, defining dude food proves more complicated than just a list of meat-laden dishes.²² Even on a short-lived blog titled “Dude Food: Culinary Survival Guide for the Modern Man,” Brooklyn-based chef Erik (no last name) wrote in 2011, “I’m all about ‘guy food’ and, well . . . the pursuit of whatever the hell *that* means.”²³ Despite his admitted uncertainty about what dude food is, Erik writes that the food on his blog “isn’t going to be ‘chefy’ or pretentious. It’ll be straight forward guy food with an everyday accessibility.” Even as he resists defining the genre and the type of man who cooks and eats it, Erik depends upon conventional definitions of masculinity as he characterizes dude food as unpretentious, straightforward, and accessible.

Such comments indicate the ambivalence involved with defining dude food, even among those who willingly adopt its label. Dude food indexes a particular type of masculinity, one that even dudes themselves engage from a wary distance. Despite this complexity, a quick survey of blogs, cookbooks, and articles referencing dude food reveals a set of qualities that typically define the genre.²⁴ To begin, conventional (and often binary) definitions of gender create hierarchies of power that feminize certain flavors, foods, and appetites, marking dainty, light, and sweet flavors and foods, eaten in small portions with restraint.²⁵ Conversely, masculinity typically defines spicy, hearty, and savory flavors, and hefty portions consumed with gusto; all considered characteristics of dude food. Devoured within moments of leisure, relaxation, and informality like backyard barbecues and tailgate parties, dude food is bold flavored and filling, often prepared on the grill, and served simply and in ample portions. Its trademark flavors and textures are emphatic and substantial: salty, fatty, smoky, zesty, and greasy.

Defined by massive portions and full-throttle flavor, dude food enthusiastically endorses excess, as it thwarts nutritional advice emphasizing moderation or balance. Dude food demonstrates the contradictions inherent to socially constructed notions of masculinity, which devalue and discourage health-related knowledge and practices (such as “healthy” eating and nutritional knowledge) as feminine.²⁶ Writer David Sax similarly asserts that food advertising to men “presents a cleverly crafted challenge to our manhood: Are you man enough to eat this shit?”²⁷ Such messages create a paradoxical

feedback loop between definitions of masculinity, dude food, and health. Articles on dude food address this contradiction with titles like “Dude Food That Is Actually Good for You,” “7 Healthy Dude Foods,” and “Diabetic Dude Food: Six Healthy Recipes Guys Will Love.”²⁸

These paradoxical dude food relationships also guide the treatment of the male body, particularly with regard to the chiseled, muscular ideal.²⁹ Contemporary fat stigma frames fatness as a social problem, one with a corporeal and ideological force that obscures gender, resulting in what are perceived as out-of-control women and failed, effeminate men.³⁰ Social body ideals and fat stigma, particularly as they are represented in media, affect men and play a role in shaping men’s body image and bodily practices, such as working out and dieting.³¹ Fat stigma oppresses women to a greater degree, however, an inequity exemplified by the cultural phenomenon of the dad bod, which made media waves in 2015.³² While societal expectations predominantly hold women’s bodies to the beauty standard of the thin ideal even into older age, the dad bod celebrates “a nice balance between a beer gut and working out,” as a male body of any age that, “says I go to the gym occasionally, but I also drink heavily on the weekends and enjoy eating eight slices of pizza at a time.”³³ In short, the dad bod is the dude food body. Representing in physical form the laidback ethos of dudeness, the dad bod dispassionately resists unreasonable, male, ideal body types. At the same time, the dad bod remains complicit in the overall structure of power that produces dad bods and dude food for men, without dismantling the thin ideal for women or broader diet culture. On blogs and throughout popular culture, these contradictory relationships between gender, health and illness, nutritious eating and indulgence, bulging muscles and dad bods animate dude food and the bodies that consume it.

Dude food’s contradictions grow further complicated within the textual landscape of recipes. In the *Washington Post*, food writer Bonnie Benwick described the audience for dude cookbooks as “a guy who’s up for spending time in the kitchen who will find the dishes relatively unfussy and meat-centric, with atta-boy recipe language.”³⁴ By crafting an overtly masculine food genre, narrative style, and set of authorial personas, dude food charts socially acceptable pathways into the kitchen for men to cook for themselves and others, spaces and actions conventionally gendered feminine. Dude food’s cool, unconcerned, and decidedly-not-earnest qualities exemplify the dude as a cultural figure and social role, representing an intriguing tension. The simple recipes, meaty ingredients, and bold flavors of dude food adhere to stereotypically masculine conventions. The tone of dude food and its related cooking instruction, however, is oppositional, suggestive, casual, and joking, indicating dude food’s ironic

and subversive aspects, even as it promotes a strict heteronormativity within homosociality. As dude food blogs – like the four blogs analyzed in this chapter – play against social conventions that code cooking as domestic, quotidian, and often derisively feminine, they illustrate tensions central to the performance of masculinity, the status of the male body, and how gender is constructed and represented in contemporary American digital media.

Four Dude Food Blogs: Origin Stories and Authorial Personae

An early forerunner in the digital dude food space, *Men's Health* began running a “Guy Gourmet” column as a twice-weekly food blog in the mid-2000s. Only a few years later, food articles were among *Men's Health*'s most popular online content.³⁵ It is unsurprising that *Men's Health* was one of the publishing entities driving dude food writing, paving the way for self-produced dude food blogs. Rodale Press launched *Men's Health* magazine in 1986 as a niche market, pilot project. By 1994, circulation numbers were double that of industry-leading men's magazines like *Esquire* and *GQ*, proving the significant market potential for men's periodicals dedicated to active living, health, and fitness, including food topics.³⁶ Expounding upon this nexus, Rodale and *Men's Health* published one of the first men's cookbooks of the twenty-first century – *A Man, a Can, a Plan* in 2002 – followed by *The Abs Diet* in 2004, marketed as the first diet book for men.³⁷ More recently, *Men's Health* published the *Guy Gourmet* cookbook in 2013, based on the blog of the same name, and the *A Man, A Pan, A Plan* cookbook in 2017. These products endorse a neoliberal model of health care that emphasizes a discourse of personal rather than social responsibility, embodied in the idealized, muscular, notably white and heterosexual, male body so prominently featured on the covers of *Men's Health* and within its pages.³⁸ This discourse forms an undercurrent beneath the dude food content featured in Guy Gourmet. *Men's Health* presents food, eating, and cooking as suitably masculine media topics, but only when situated within the pursuit of an ideal body type, presented as the material cornerstone of personal health for “real men.”

Despite this explicit focus on a healthy consumer lifestyle, *Men's Health* and Guy Gourmet feature dude food. In a 2012 article, “In Defense of Dude Food,” Paul Kita of *Men's Health*, who writes much of the Guy Gourmet content, addressed the food genre’s conflicted relationship with nutrition and health, but asserted that the magazine “subscribes to a strict belief in moderation.”³⁹ Simultaneously endorsing hot dogs and salads, decadent satisfaction and controlled restraint, the *Men's Health* brand of masculinity

as personal responsibility articulates the tensions inherent to dude food, a food genre rooted in the incongruous messiness of excess.

It is within this contradictory landscape of food and fitness that three amateur-produced blogs practice unique authorial personae and narrative styles as they offer their own definitions of food and gender. As well-read and discussed blogs, *DudeFoods*, *B.U.F.F. Dudes*, and *The Dude Diet* (a section of posts on the blog *Domesticate ME!*) reinforce and influence popular understandings of dude food and masculinities within the blogosphere. Each has also transformed their blogging into an income-generating activity, demonstrating the flow of content and capital between new and old media forms to which many bloggers aspire.⁴⁰

Referred to as “the god of bacon” and “the Michelangelo of munchies,” Wisconsin-based Nick Chipman began the *DudeFoods* blog in Fall 2010.⁴¹ Confessing that he was “one of the pickiest eaters ever” growing up, Chipman writes that the blog serves as his “vessel” for “catching up” on “the years of amazing cuisine” he missed. Compared to *B.U.F.F. Dudes* and *The Dude Diet*, *DudeFoods* endorses the most purely dude food approach, which emphasizes extreme flavor, cares little about nutritional moderation, and embraces the dad bod. On *DudeFoods*, Chipman cooks and eats what he describes as “big” and “crazy” food, like chicken wings breaded with waffles and a sandwich with twenty-six different toppings. As a white, cis-gender, heterosexual, married, self-professed overweight man, Chipman’s authorial persona fully endorses the genre’s conventional masculinity, heteronormativity, and excess, encouraging readers to “just sit back, relax, and let the gluttony begin!”

B.U.F.F. (Better Understanding of Food & Fitness) Dudes is the blog project of California-based brothers Hudson and Brandon White, inspired after their fitness YouTube channel, which they began in 2012, where some of their videos garner millions of views. With a thread of cheeky humor throughout, the *B.U.F.F. Dudes* food blog diverges from traditional dude food, such as that prepared, eaten, and shared by Chipman. The White brothers instead situate food as part of a regimen to achieve an idealized – muscular, heterosexual, white – male body, which both brothers possess and spend their days maintaining. Adopting the authorial persona of the supremely masculine fitness expert – à la *Men’s Health* – the brothers employ the cool, joking, and unserious tone of dudeness as they communicate their strict dietary and fitness advice. In this vein, the “About” page of their blog signs off, “Kick Ass, Eat Well, and Stay Buff!” Presenting a different definition of dude food, the White brothers emphasize extreme nutrition, care less about dude food flavor, though they do offer recipes for dude food substitutes, and promote an idealized male body, renouncing the dad bod.

Lastly, Serena Wolf started *Domesticate ME!* while enrolled in culinary school in Paris and currently blogs from New York City. Navigating the gender dynamics of dude food differently than Chipman and the White brothers, Wolf expertly performs the “cool girl” persona, which media studies scholar Anne Helen Petersen defines as “basically dudes masquerading in beautiful women’s bodies, reaping the privileges of both.”⁴² Petersen further describes the persona as “the way our society implicitly instructs young women on how to be awesome: Be chill and don’t be a downer, act like a dude but look like a supermodel.” Through her thin body, beauty work, and sartorial selections, Wolf performs conventional femininity, but she employs dude masculinity in her blog’s casual tone, often featuring playful profanity, which is conspicuously absent from traditional food blogs. Her blog’s original mission was to “help others get their shit together in the kitchen. And make it fun, dammit,” while recipe posts describe her Southwestern Turkey and Quinoa Stuffed Peppers as “badass flavor bombs” and conclude with instructions to “get your feast on.” Pushing the limits of cool-girl dude food, Wolf’s cooking hints feature the sexualized header, “just the tip.”

Offering a unique example of a female-authored dude food blog, Wolf writes that she started *The Dude Diet* in September 2012 for her boyfriend, Logan, who she describes as a one-time college athlete who in the intervening years gained weight and wanted to lose it. Situating the fat male body as one requiring reform, Wolf writes that men “are often nutritionally confused,” as they “struggle with healthy eating” and envision “‘healthy food’ as salads, tofu, and all manner of boring, tasteless things.”⁴³ Despite the fact that Wolf blogs as a woman and endeavors to reconfigure the nutritional composition of dude food while maintaining its typical flavor profile, her origin story for *The Dude Diet* demonstrates the enduring heteronormativity of dude food. *The Dude Diet* also reinforces the disciplining ethos present on *B.U.F.F. Dudes*. Furthermore, *The Dude Diet* reinforces gendered conventions that code nutritious food, healthy eating, and dieting as feminine (and feminizing) and men’s appetites as “hearty” and demanding satisfaction. Navigating a middle ground between Chipman’s *DudeFoods* and the White brothers’ *B.U.F.F. Dudes* recipe blog, Wolf’s *The Dude Diet*, which was published as a cookbook in 2016, emphasizes extreme flavor, while endorsing nutritional moderation, and denigrating the dad bod.

Unpacking Dude Food’s Variability through Narrative Styles

While these three food blogs all consider dudeness, each blogger employs a unique narrative style and version of dude food, which they communicate

through prose, recipes, and food photography. On *DudeFoods*, Nick Chipman's creations most closely align with dude food excess, as he publishes recipes for Deep-Fried Spaghetti, Pulled Pork Benedict, Deep-Fried Doritos-Crusted Bacon, and a macaroni and cheese pie with a crust made entirely out of bacon. Furthermore, Chipman purposefully designates recipes on the blog that deviate from his dude food norms. When he cooks Butternut Squash Risotto with Roasted Garlic and Cracked Black Pepper Pork Tenderloin he writes, "What!? A blog post that doesn't involve me deep frying something!? Yep, I'm going all fancy on you guys with this one."⁴⁴ To compensate, he emphasizes steadfast dude food qualities, assuring readers, "but what's also really great about this recipe is how insanely simple it is." Further qualifying the recipe, Chipman suggests making this "fancy" dish for a girlfriend, fiancée, wife, or mom, marking the dish as feminized fare. While some *DudeFoods* posts include ingredient lists and step-by-step instructions, Chipman's recipes generally serve not as instructions for readers to follow or narratives unto themselves, but as textual proof of his over-the-top culinary exploits. Similarly, his food photography employs a nearly documentary or archival style. Compared to the artfully curated, overhead shots that typify most food blogs, Chipman shoots his photographs mostly head on or from a slight overhead angle. Communicating a dude food defined by conventional masculinity, he plates his dishes simply and attractively on white plates, on a white surface, against an all-white background.

Some of Chipman's creations – like the McEverything, an assembled tower of every sandwich on the McDonald's menu – require no cooking at all. Such recipes serve as overt performances of exaggerated dude food consumption with an edge of competitive destruction, which his readers applaud and encourage. This spirit characterizes Chipman's signature culinary creation – the bacon weave – as the blog features recipes for the bacon weave taco, ice cream sandwich, Elvis sandwich, double cheeseburger, quesadilla, and even an Easter ham adorned with bacon weave. Unlike the dialogue on typical food blogs – where readers ask cooking questions, share their experiences, and offer recipe modifications – Chipman's readers instead offer suggestions that further imagine the creative excess of dude food. For example, one reader encourages Chipman to add an inner layer of prosciutto to his bacon weave taco so "it does not leak cheesey goodness," while another proposes, "Deep fry the whole thing, have paramedics on deck," reinforcing dude food's complicated relationship with nutrition and health.

Interestingly, *B.U.F.F. Dudes* also features a bacon taco shell recipe, but one that affords exaggerated nutritional content in an effort to discipline the male body, rather than the hyperbolic flavor that defines traditional dude food. Combining straightforward prose, humor, and a tone of assertive

prodigality, the recipe post begins, “What goes good with meat? More meat.” The recipe bombastically promises “a protein packed Taco which’ll have all other meals bowing their heads and packing their bags in shame.” Repeatedly referencing competition and protein (a macronutrient associated both nutritionally and culturally with strength and muscularity), Hudson and Brandon White seek to masculinize this recipe and their food blog. Their focus on protein proves narrow in gastronomic terms, as the taco recipe calls for only meat: Fourteen slices of extra lean turkey bacon, woven together to make the taco shell, stuffed with four ounces of cooked and shredded boneless, skinless chicken. Listing spinach or lettuce, diced tomato, and shredded cheese as optional ingredients, the recipe yields 71 grams of protein, but likely less than desirable flavor and texture. In the language of recipes, *B.U.F.F. Dudes* communicates and constructs gendered conventions through an ostensibly masculine emphasis upon macronutrients for fitness training purposes, rather than food blogs’ more typical (and purportedly feminine) emphasis on tasty, praise-worthy dishes.⁴⁵

Traditional dude food items, flavors, and ingredients are not wholly absent from *B.U.F.F. Dudes*, however, as the blog supplies recipes for modified versions of typical dude foods like burritos, sub sandwiches, tacos, and buffalo wings. These recipes curtail the genre’s excess in nutritional terms, instead offering high-protein and low-carbohydrate recipes that vow, “The battle against unhealthy eating begins here!” Visualizing the youthful and playful themes of dudeness, the blog features the brothers themselves in cooking and fitness videos, in which they consistently address their audience with “Hey, dudes.” The blog also depicts the brothers as animated video-game avatars, punching and kicking foods like burgers, fries, donuts, and pizza, which the brothers do not endorse as part of their diet. Unlike Chipman’s ultra simple but professional quality dude food photography, photos on the *B.U.F.F. Dudes* food blog are primarily more amateur looking snapshots, taken in the compromised lighting of a small, home kitchen. Just as the recipes place less emphasis upon taste, these photographs prioritize functional presentation, saving aesthetics for renderings of the White brothers’ muscular bodies.

While *DudeFoods* offers conventional dude food with overstated, deep-fried flavor and little regard for nutritional content and *B.U.F.F. Dudes* serves up fitness-centric recipes that modify dude food dishes to promote nutritional value at the expense of flavor, Serena Wolf’s *The Dude Diet* works between these two extremes. With her cookbook’s subtitle, “Clean(ish) Food for People Who Like to Eat Dirty,” Wolf claims to combine the “clean eating” diet trend that *B.U.F.F. Dudes* endorses, while emphasizing the flavorful side of dude food as “dirty,” delicious, and desirable.

Emphasizing standard dietetic messages to eat less red meat, consume more whole grains and produce, and curb refined sugar and fried foods, the cookbook's recipes include dishes named with overtly masculine flare like Dude Diet Huevos Rancheros, Super Sloppy Joes, Epic Meat Loaf, Boss Bean Dip, and Manly Mediterranean Salad. Other recipes index dude food less directly, instead emphasizing "healthy" and trendy ingredients – such as Bacon and Egg Quinoa Bowl and Asian Kale Salad with Chia-Crusted Tuna – subtly pushing the limits of what recipes fit the dude food category. On the blog and in the cookbook, *The Dude Diet's* food photography typifies the highly stylized, brightly lit, colorful, and tantalizing nature of food blog imagery that neither *DudeFoods* nor *B.U.F.F. Dudes* employ. These aesthetic norms demonstrate visually how *The Dude Diet's* authorial persona and narrative style operate within a middle ground of dude food's culinary, nutritional, and gendered extremes.

These dude food blogs also variably consider the male body, encompassing both lean, muscled figures and dad bods. Proudly sporting a dad bod fully in keeping with his authorial persona, Chipman writes that he started *DudeFoods* "to the chagrin of my then fiancée – now wife – who was worried I'd outgrow my tux before our upcoming wedding. Well . . . she was right . . . As my waistline grew though so did my readership and it's been increasing non-stop in the seven years since."⁴⁶ Shunning advice from *Men's Health* Guy Gourmet, *B.U.F.F. Dudes*, and *The Dude Diet* to restrain his appetite and control his body, Chipman presents dude food, his consumption of it, and his expanding waistline as related in natural, unproblematic, and even productive ways. Pushing the limits of excess, Chipman prepares, photographs, presents, and consumes dude food, providing vicarious consumption for his blog readers, who energetically cheer him on.

While Chipman embraces his expanding girth despite his fiancée's concerns, the opposite scenario inspired *The Dude Diet*. With humor, but nevertheless derisively putting the fat male body center stage, Wolf started the diet to "help my roommate button his jeans and stop meat sweating through our sheets" and "rid the world of man boobs."⁴⁷ The rise of the dad bod is actually part of *The Dude Diet* narrative, as Wolf writes that her boyfriend resisted her nutritional advances on the grounds that the dad bod made them obsolete. Cookbook author and food TV celebrity Daphne Oz's endorsement of *The Dude Diet* cookbook further demonstrates how Wolf's recipes reconfigure the excess of dude food and its associated body type. Oz asserts that "[Wolf's] dude food for manly men (and badass ladies) is just what we ordered: double flavor, extra nutrition, hold the beer belly."⁴⁸ Maintaining dude food's flavor profile, Wolf shifts the notion of excess to extra nutrition, which inversely functions to control and reduce the body, banish the beer

belly, and transform the dad bod. On *B.U.F.F. Dudes*, the White brothers take such actions a step further, as they promote not just extra nutrition, but over-the-top nutrition. They focus on macronutrient requirements to fuel not a transformed dad bod, but an idealized, very muscular body – a body like those on the cover of *Men's Health*, as the material representation of their masculinity, which is central to their personae.

Despite adopting unique authorial personae and narrative styles that define dude food in different ways, each blog and blogger constructs a similar and conventional understanding of masculinity and manhood, one that does not further develop dude food's ironic and subversive potentials. While Wolf's *The Dude Diet* manipulates dude food flavors in order to promote nutrition savvy, it seeks to slim the fat male body, denigrating the dad bod as it promotes a rationalized, controlled male body and consumption habits. The *B.U.F.F. Dudes* blog explicitly frames food consumption in terms of macronutrients and within the pursuit of an idealized, muscular, white, male body type – a physical form as out of reach for most men as the thin ideal is for most women. While Chipman provides blog readers with vicarious consumption of dude food, he does so within a limited frame of what foods and flavors fit within the bounds of conventional masculinity. Like Chipman's vicarious consumption of dude food, the White brothers offer the vicarious achievement and mediated consumption of their bodies. Reinforcing the contradictions of dude food, the *B.U.F.F. Dudes* blog claims to offer the key to unlocking conventional masculinity's physical ideals through intense physical exercise and the *B.U.F.F.* brand of dude food, one with extra nutrition, but without much flavor.

Serving up step-by-step recipes, stylized food photography, and personal narratives, food blogs emerged in the late twentieth-century as a thematic digital medium that created new opportunities and spaces for communication and for gender construction. Authorship, audience, text, images, aesthetics, recipes, and commercial activities like sponsorships and cookbook deals each inform how dude food blogs shape and reflect gender in American sociocultural life. As dude food blogs construct masculinity, they also intervene in the complicated ways that gender shapes nutrition knowledge and notions of what health is and what "healthy" bodies should be. Founded on a genre dedicated to celebratory excess, dude food blogs provide ways to vicariously consume the foods and muscularity that comprise conventional masculinity. As texts that help to produce and reproduce gender, however, these blogs do not appear to significantly redefine norms and conventions through food, flavors, cooking, and the body. Whether produced by men or women, calorie-laden or macronutrient-centric, oriented positively or negatively around fat and muscular male bodies, dude food demonstrates the

contradictions of performing masculinity in the twenty-first century, in the blogosphere and elsewhere.

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